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

**Please also note new arrangements for requesting review copies –
see page 55, above the list of books for review.**



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

Photographs supplied by

Professor Bettina Schmidt

Alan Underwood

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Guardian Online

Drawing by Eric Cook

Editorial

There are many changes coming for AHSSSE, as outlined by Andy on page 18. The offices of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer will be replaced by a management team. I understand the changes will have very little impact on how the Society is run for members, so my only regret is the corporate-speak which will replace these titles.

There are however some changes on the ground: very few local groups are left functioning, sadly; Midlands, Swansea and West Wales groups are no more. The Oxford/ Cotswold group is in transition - Tanya Garland is taking over as organiser from Rhonda Rhiachi, so we can certainly look forward to the future for this group. Tanya's contact details are on page 29. The London group, John Franklin assures me, will continue and S.E. Wales is going from strength to strength, steered with a light hand by Mary Cook. In England there seems to be a move towards joint events with other like-minded groups, such as the AHSSSE/SMN conference this summer (page 28).

So on to the content of this issue: 'The whole of the natural world is imbued with a numinous sacred spirit.' The first sentence in Howard Jones' article 'Consciousness in Nature' (p.6) sets the tone. Ways in which Spirit and the natural world entwine run through the journal from this, the first article, to the subject of David Greenwood's PhD thesis which, he says, 'is concerned with ways in which artists have endeavoured to express the numinous or point towards the Transcendent through landscape painting.' Then on to the report by Taras Handziy on his research, which concerns shamanic journeying and the evolution of consciousness (p.21). In the book review section we have a review of an anthology on spirit embodiment by Professor Schmidt, one on the Santo Daime religion which combines animism with Christianity, and another of 'The Last of the Shor Shamans'. These contributions explore the connection between the spirit and the natural world in the context of shamanic experience. The book by Holz and Holz reviewed on page 43 is about the experience of aboriginal healing, which has the sacredness of nature at its heart.

Then we have the first part of the review by Daniel 'woodsman' Craver of Richard Bohannon's major collection on religions and environments, both historical and contemporary, in which the sacredness of the wilderness is explored. Surprisingly, the review of the touching, illuminating and hopeful book by Maggie la Tourelle on her mother's journey into dementia also be seen in this context: Maggie's mother tells her 'we are all living in other worlds' (p.49). This idea, in the sense of accessing more worlds than our familiar three dimensional one, is central to the shaman's journey.

So the theme of spirit in nature in this issue takes us from Britain to the Ukraine in central Europe, on to the Altai mountains in central Asia, and through the Americas to Australia. A broad inclusive sweep. Howard's article ends with a plea which is echoed in Daniel's review: 'If we regard the divine as an all-pervading cosmic spirit ... We need to be ever conscious of the sentience of the natural world of which we are an integral part. We abuse our trusteeship of Nature at our peril'.



There is however another important element in this issue and I hope I may be forgiven for emphasising something that many may see as 'only' political, although the pictures of the migrants' camp in Calais on the last page do say otherwise ... '

For me, these pictures tell a story which connects with the debate we had at Llantarnam about religion and spirituality; we met an unexpected boundary, to me at least, where we polarised into opposite camps. Those who have left organised religious institutions for a more individual, unstructured spirituality* questioned the relevance of religious ceremony to spirituality, and seemed to have departed from the live-and-let-live position I would expect from such 'free thinkers'. I would previously have associated such a lack of empathy for others' spiritual choices with (some) members of mainstream religious faiths.

I have tried to convey the content of this debate at Llantarnam with as much diplomacy as possible - it felt necessary to portray it in the report (rather than skirt around it for the sake of politeness) as there seemed to be a consensus that we had become too 'cosy' at these gatherings, a sentiment aired by Alan that others at Sunday's discussion shared. As Louis said 'the world is changing and we need to change with it'.

Which brings me back to migrants: it can be seen from the pictures I have put around the updated version of my poem, that religion as an institution, the cross as a symbol of hope, the coming together to share age-old rituals, (whether around the cross, the crescent or the 6 pointed star) can be vital when one has lost everything else in one's life. The 'migrants' built this church, this spiritual lifeline when they had no homes any more, nowhere to sleep safely, when their past was a nightmare and their future a vista of struggle and danger. It was as necessary to them as food and shelter. I rest my case; that the freedom to worship as a member of a faith is as important as that of the individual to follow their own path. It is all very well to experiment with spirituality when one lives in safety and comfort, indeed it is probably the 'right' way for us who are fortunate enough ... the individual spiritual quest is gaining ground in this century, thus do we advance and evolve. I honour and respect Mary's description of what this personal quest means to her. But I also honour and respect Jonathan's continual and faithful striving to make church ceremonies relevant to a changing world. Please read the Llantarnam report, and look at the two back pages with an open heart.

Patricia Murphy



A View from the Chair

I have recently returned from this year's Annual Gathering hosted in the peaceful setting of Llantarnam Abbey in Wales, where the theme for the weekend was 'Crossing Boundaries'. It may be too early to say what boundaries were met and crossed by the attendees, and some may still be reflecting on that question, as indeed I am. In a wider context the whole question of boundaries is one which we have to address in our daily lives where they can provide both reassurance and security, but may cause anxiety and perhaps liberation when we have to challenge or cross them.

Since my last report a number of the local AHS Groups have decided to close; sadly we will be losing the West Midlands Group (under Dr Sheelah James), the Chesterfield Group (under Mike Rush) and the Swansea Group (under Dr Penny Sartori). The Oxford & Cotswold Group will now be led by Tanya Garland who recently took over from Rhonda Riachi. My personal thanks to Mike, Penny, Rhonda and Sheelah for running these groups over many years. I would also like to record my thanks to Marian MacPolin who is standing down as Membership Secretary in September. Marian very ably took great care of our membership requirements over the last three years and introduced some new practices to streamline the whole process.

The Society will be undergoing a change of status in the future as a result of a new incorporation deed which the Alister Hardy Trustees are currently preparing under the guidance of the Charity Commission. I have prepared a more detailed report about this change which is included on page 18 of this issue.

I am pleased to confirm that this year's Open Day is on Saturday 17th October at the Friends Meeting House in Oxford. The annual Memorial Lecture will be given by Professor Bettina Schmidt, and a further lecture will be delivered by Dr Penny Sartori who will be speaking about NDEs based on her recently published book. I very much look forward to welcoming Bettina and Penny to Oxford in October.

This year marks a significant anniversary which I would like to mention, and I am grateful to John Franklin for bringing this to my notice. This year is the 30th anniversary of the award of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion to Sir Alister Hardy, and its presentation at Buckingham Palace on the 13th May 1985 to Belinda Farley, his daughter. Sir Alister was unable to attend as he had recently suffered a stroke. We hope to mark this event at Open Day in October. Reflecting on those 30 years we can appreciate how much has been achieved since those early days when the first seeds of study into religious experience were sown by Professor Hardy at his Research Unit in Oxford. I am confident that his legacy will continue carrying us forward for the next 30 years and beyond.

Andrew Burns, AHSSSE Chair



Consciousness in Nature

The whole of the natural world is imbued with a numinous sacred spirit. This is a belief that seems to have been associated with indigenous peoples ever since *Homo sapiens* first evolved on earth. Indeed, whatever image people have of their deity, the notion still persists today amongst a majority of humankind that there is a purpose to human life and that there is a designing force or spirit behind our very existence. For many, such a spirit provides their image of their god.

The key feature that differentiates the levels within what the ancient philosophers called the Great Chain of Being is the extent to which we are able to interact with this cosmic spirit. At the lowest level we have the insentient rocks and minerals. Even here, many natural rock formations are considered to be sacred by indigenous tribes, such as Uluru or Ayers Rock to the Australian aborigines, Monument Valley in Arizona to the Navajo Amerindians, Mt. Kilauea in Hawaii as the birthplace of the goddess of volcanoes, and Pele to native Hawaiians. Further, some native peoples in Hawaii, and in China, and some spiritual healers in the west maintain that placing crystals of the appropriate colour on the human body over the sites where, it is claimed, the *chakras* (vortices) of energy are located, enhances the input of *chi* or spiritual energy from the universe into the individual. When Christianity came to Britain, the new Christians used pagan sacred sites to build their churches – partly so that pagans would continue to worship at the same place and probably also to make use of whatever sacred energy the site held. Similarly, the Hanging Monastery on Xuanshan Mountain in China and the Meteora monasteries in Kalampaka in Greece are built on precipitous outcrops of rocks because of the sacredness of these sites, despite their inaccessibility.

There are numerous artificially created ‘temples’ for prayer or sacred burial, made from megaliths of natural stone, to be found throughout the world where there are no suitable natural structures locally. Some of the best known examples of stone tombs or temples constructed of dolmens from the early Celtic pagan settlements are to be found in the eastern part of Ireland, with the Newgrange megalithic tomb as the outstanding example. These structures probably date back to before the pyramids of Egypt, more than 3000 years BCE and a long time before the expansion of the European Celts into Britain. They were probably used both for burial of the elders of the tribes and as temples to the sun, moon and stars. These testimonies to pagan religion have survived in the more remote corners of Europe where the Roman invaders were never able to fully subdue the local population and form settlements of their own. The structures at Stonehenge and Avebury in Wiltshire, England, are probably the best-known examples of such pagan temples on mainland Britain. The erection of such massive constructions as these must have involved considerable time and labour, which must have been thought worthwhile for their spiritual ends – an indication of the importance of spirituality in the lives of early peoples.

In Scotland, the ceremonial sites are much less accessible than those of Wiltshire. The two most important are the Machrie Moor standing stones on the Isle of Arran and the Callanish standing stones in the Outer Hebrides. At Machrie only four stones now remain of two large circles. Erected at a time when the climate would have been much more hospitable and welcoming to the Celtic immigrants, the Machrie stones guard the graves of Neolithic farmers whose skeletal remains have been found buried with their arrowheads. The Callanish stones in the Isle of Lewis still form a veritable petrified forest which, legend has it, represent thirteen giants who refused to convert to Christianity, and were turned to stone as a consequence by St. Kieran in a characteristically uncharitable act.

In Wales, the Pentre Ifan cromlech near Nevern in Pembrokeshire, known locally as Arthur's Quoit, served as a burial ground for up to fifty tribesmen and women. It consists of a curved cap-stone, nearly 5 meters long, supported by three uprights. Some time after its construction the burial ground was covered with a mound of earth to make a barrow, rather like that at Silbury Hill near Avebury, bounded by a dry-stone and timber wall that has long-since disintegrated. Other Celtic burial sites at Samson's Quoit and Llech y Drybedd ('Stone of the Three Graves') are near to Nevern. In the Preseli Mountains of Pembrokeshire there is a hillside, Carn Menyn, that is strewn with rough-shaped weathered boulders that have fallen from the rock formations above, like some gigantic scree. Sir Andrew Ramsey suggested in the mid-19th century that it was from here that the bluestones of Stonehenge are likely to have been quarried.

It is not only in Britain that such ancient stone monuments survive. In Sine-Ngayene in southern Senegal the necropolis is marked with a series of several dozen circles of small standing stones, each less than a metre high. The site here is also of Iron Age origin. At Tagarp in Sweden, an enclosed tumulus, comprising passage and burial chamber within, has a memorial site outside for worship so that successive generations could come and pay their respects to the ancestors. Such megalithic tombs are to be found in many other sites across Europe, but the menhirs and dolmens at Carnac are by far the most impressive. Carnac is a small town on the southern Atlantic coast of Brittany in France where there are more than 3000 Neolithic monuments of various kinds. All of these sites indicate the importance to spiritual people of establishing monumental locations that would allow them to commune with their gods through nature.

Above the rocks in the Great Chain of Being come the plants. Indigenous people still venerate the trees and animals on which they depend for their very survival. Trees have been on Earth for more than 300 million years. Throughout human civilization they have been associated with magic and ritual because it was believed that they were imbued with spirituality, and spirituality was associated with wisdom. Because trees were usually much longer-living than humans, and natural rock formations even more so, it was believed that they retained knowledge from one generation to the next and, as a result, that they were home to the spirits of past generations with the wisdom they possessed. As Karen Armstrong says in her book *A Short History of Myth*: 'Trees, stones and heavenly bodies were never objects of worship in themselves but were revered because they were epiphanies of a hidden force that could be seen powerfully at work in all natural phenomena, giving people intimations of another, more potent reality'. The old Norse word '*vid*' or '*vithe*' means wood or forest, but it has given us a number of words associated with knowledge or wisdom: *witan* (Old English: to know), *wissen* (German: to know), '*wits*', '*wise*' and '*wisdom*'. Cleve Backster and others have shown that plants too respond to tender loving care quite apart from their need for basic nutrients.

With our modern materialistic philosophy of life, animals are reared and slaughtered to sustain us with little or no thought of any possible consciousness that those animals might possess. The idea of not wasting any living thing that we have to kill – whether plants or animals – has been lost with the advent of junk food. Those who eat meat claim that the flesh of animals raised in the wild, or at least under humane, stress-free and ecologically friendly conditions, is much more flavourful than that from battery hens or cattle that never see the light of day or eat fresh grass. Native peoples hold ceremonies of thanks and prayers for forgiveness to their spirits if they need to slaughter other living creatures for food and other items needed for their survival, or even when they cut down trees to build shelter. Some adherents of structured religions still say grace before a meal – one of the few benefits of organized religion. The idea of simply eating together as a tribe, family or friendship unit and

celebrating the source of our nourishment is another way of acknowledging and keeping to the forefront of our minds the enormous bounty that surrounds us – for the present. The philosophy of preserving our environment is of vital importance for the survival of us all, not just for a few New Age ‘Greens’.

Cats and dogs are commonly kept as pets because they have a sentience that allows a special bonding with us. Rupert Sheldrake’s scientific study of dogs who know when their owners are coming home is well known. But as several people have shown in recent decades, even wild animals are capable of bonding with humans. The bonding of the Adamsons with a baby lioness, that of Dian Fossey with the mountain gorillas of Rwanda, and of Jane Goodall with chimpanzees in the Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania have become the inspiration for popular books and movies. We need to treat our food-source livestock with the same loving care we show to our pets.

There is a message here for us humans that we should keep at the forefront of our minds concerning the consciousness that lies within the plants and animals of the natural world, however rudimentary that may be. Our thoughts and deeds impact hugely on others. If we regard the divine as an all-pervading cosmic spirit, then this energy lies within the rocks and minerals of the earth too and comprises their sacredness and perhaps their healing energies. That energy is certainly a part of all living things as well as ourselves. If we are to flourish we need to be ever conscious of the sentience of the natural world of which we are an integral part. We abuse our trusteeship of Nature at our peril.

Howard Jones

Natural History of Angels

Introduction

Following the Study of Angels conference at Lampeter [see report on page 19], with keynote address from Professor June Boyce-Tillman, I offer some additional food for thought, especially concerning the imagery we associate with angels. I am currently researching ‘angel-spirituality’ among British women during the past thirty years. In 1974 I had a personal experience that provoked the question ‘was that an angel?’ Since then, angels have been my primary topic for academic studies. It is a long and complex story, but I aim to give an overview of the *Natural History of Angels* in two parts, the second of which will appear in the next issue of *De Numine*.

Part One

Ancient Near-East

Intimations that angels intervened with human affairs in the early days of human civilization appear in the Hebrew bible in the sketchy history of an antediluvian era. The *Book of Genesis* reports that the *bene elohim* (sons of God) angels, elsewhere described as ‘fallen’¹, took daughters of men as wives (Genesis 6:2). Their hybrid offspring were ‘mighty men ... the men of renown’ (Genesis 6:4). Their genealogy includes Methuselah, who lived nearly one thousand years; one of his descendants was Noah².



Syrian basalt slab image of goddess or seraph, c. 10thc BC

In the Genesis version of the flood story, Noah is instructed by God to build the ark, for which God dictates the measurements. In the *Book of Enoch* (c.300 BCE) the flood warning and blueprint for the ark is delivered by Archangel Uriel (Enoch 10: 1-4). In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and other Babylonian texts (including the more recently discovered *Ark Tablet*)³, we find an older version of the flood myth which describes how Ea, the god of wisdom, warns Uta-Napishtim about the forthcoming weather conditions and tells him how to build a boat. The Babylonian dimensions are considerably larger than those given to Noah – this boat would be a circular, coracle-style boat, as large as a football pitch.

Jewish exile in Babylon

When the theologically single-minded Jews met the Assyrian gods during the Babylonian exile (c.597-539 BCE), they considered that maybe the One God might have a heavenly council of lesser celestial beings, perhaps *bene elohim* (*Book of Job* 1:6), and these may be the original Archangels.

Mazdaism, the religion of Zoroaster, was well established in Babylon during this period and it seems very likely that Jewish thinkers assimilated some concepts from Mazdean angelology. For example, the Mazdean *favashi* were female genii, celestial prototypes for created beings and human believers – perhaps guardian angels, or ‘ideal forms’. Early extra-canonical texts, such as the *Book of Enoch*, appear to have adopted a Mazdean style dualism, which appears in later kabbalah, especially the *Zohar*.

Ezekiel prophesied during the exile, and his vision of the divine chariot describes the glory of God going up ‘from the cherub’ (*Book of Ezekiel* 9:3 and 10:4). The Hebrew word *keruv* (plural *keruvim* – as in cherubim) is thought to derive from the Akkadian *karibu*, meaning to pray or to bless. The later visions in the *Book of Daniel* (2nd c. BCE) include angels with names – Gabriel and Michael. The ‘el’ suffix means ‘of God’, the prefix tells us the quality or role. Gabriel means strength of God; Michael means ‘like unto God’.

Extra canonical and apocryphal texts, such as the *Book of Tobit*, and the *Book of Enoch*, present additional Archangels, including Raphael (healing of God) and Uriel (light of God) – who, together with Gabriel and Michael, make up the ‘famous four’ depicted in Christian stained glass windows. These Archangels were associated with four of the brightest stars in the sky, known as the Royal Stars of Persia (Antares, Aldebaran, Regulus, Fomalhaut).

In the *Book of Tobit*, Raphael refers to the ‘seven spirits who stand before the throne’ – thus tallying with seven named archangels – Gabriel, Michael, Raphael, Uriel, Raguel, Remiel, Saraquael – found in *The Book of Enoch*. From these pre-Christian texts we see that celestial emissaries with names were established before the Christian gospels were written.

Did these early angels have wings? In Isaiah (6:2) the seraphim have three pairs of wings. Ezekiel’s *chayot* (living creatures) (Ezekiel 1:8-9), resemble the winged hybrid man-beasts that guard the gates of the Assyrian palace of Sargon II (721-705 BCE).



Neo-Assyrian statue from Northern Iraq, palace of Ashurnasirpal II c 883-859 BCE

Daniel (10:5-6) describes a vision, achieved after three weeks of fasting, of a man clothed in linen, bedecked in gold, with a body like beryl, a face like lightening, eyes like lamps of fire and feet like polished brass – but no wings. Earlier, Daniel has previously had an experience with Gabriel (8:16) but gives no description. Although the ‘man clothed in linen’ discusses the role of Michael, who is described as ‘your prince’, the ‘man’ may not be an angel at all, but a celestial being of higher status altogether: possibly ‘the Lord’. (10:12-21)

Early Christian adopters

In Matthew’s gospel, the conception of Jesus is announced to Joseph in a dream by ‘the angel of the Lord’ (1:20). In Luke, it is the angel Gabriel that speaks directly to Mary, who is sufficiently wakeful to question her fate (1:26-35). The angel at the sepulchre, after the resurrection of Jesus in Matthew’s gospel, is ‘the angel of the Lord’. His countenance was ‘like lightening’ and ‘his raiment white as snow’ (28:2-3). The same scene in Mark, describes ‘a young man clothed in a long white garment ...’ (16:5). In Luke, there are two men in shining garments (24:4). In John, two ‘angels in white’ are sitting in the sepulchre. There are no wings mentioned in any of these accounts.



Celestial Hierarchies of Dionysius

In the sixth century CE, the *Celestial Hierarchies* of Pseudo-Dionysius offered a model of nine orders of intermediary beings, with seraphim closest to the Godhead, and angels being closer to humanity. Thomas Aquinas, who was unaware that the author was not, as claimed, the first century Dionysius the Aeropagite who had been a disciple of Paul,

incorporated the hierarchies into his *Summa Theologica* and this heavenly map was incorporated into church teaching by Pope Gregory 1.

The Second Council of Nicea (787 CE) explicitly encouraged the depiction of angels on the walls of churches, on tapestries and holy vestments, after which angelic imagery proliferates and angels are invariably depicted with wings.

Kabbalah

The *Sefer ha'Yetzirah* (the Book of Creation) is the oldest kabbalistic text, c. first century CE, but the content was probably collated from earlier oral traditions. The ‘Gra’ version describes the creation of celestial beings, mostly culled from Ezekiel and Isaiah. The possibly earlier text, *Sefer ha'Razim*, (the Book of the Mysteries), includes angelic invocations. In the 12th century, the *Sefer ha'Bahir* (Book of Illumination) describes angels as ‘forms’ or ‘structures’, suggestive of Platonic ‘ideal forms’, and the late 13th century Book of Splendour – *Sefer ha'Zohar* – offered a gnostic development, in which the *sitra ahra* (the other side) counterpoints the good angels.⁴

Renaissance

Italian Neo-Platonists gave serious consideration to doctrines about angels. In Ficino’s work (1433-1499), magic draws on the angels of the planetary spheres; Giorgi (1466-1540) understands that magic relies on co-operation with a guardian angel and angels in the celestial spheres; Campanella (1568–1639) claimed to communicate with angels in the stars. In 1492 the expulsion of the Jews from all Spanish territories brought an influx of Jewish kabbalists into Northern Europe, where humanist scholars and philosophers were delighted

to receive kabbalistic texts, such as *The Zohar*. Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), adapted Jewish mystical wisdom as Cabala – using ‘C’ to denote its Christianisation. Pico wanted to prove the Jews should acknowledge Christ and scoured kabbalistic content for ‘evidence’ that Jesus was the true Messiah. Pico’s scholarly precision and effort contributed to the longer-term assimilation of kabbalah – including Jewish angelology – into the Western Esoteric tradition. German humanist theologian Henry Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) collated *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, first printed in 1531; he acknowledged the angelic content was revealed to him by ‘the Hebrew mecubals’. This substantial text influenced the work of Dr. John Dee (1527-1609), Elizabethan alchemist astrologer, cartographer and Royal spymaster.

Dee documented detailed experiments in which he conversed with angels, who introduced a unique ‘Enochian’ alphabet and language that pre-dated Hebrew.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the rise of theological reform, there was much summoning and conversing with angels going on in the late Elizabethan period. Freedom from the constraints of Catholic confession may have given non-conformists opportunities to experiment with spiritual methodologies previously regarded as heterodox.

ENOCHIAN		Æ	ALPHABET		
					
					
					
					

Enochian language delivered to Dr. Dee during scrying sessions using crystal ball

English Protestants

My research focuses on British women and, although most of them will not have an allegiance to the Church of England, this leads me to explore Protestant responses to angelology. Post-Reformation religious zeal led directly to the founding of the United States, and recent angelology has been seeded in Britain by American New Age authors, so this thread is significant for my quest.

Seventeenth-century Protestants were more engaged with angels and invisible realms than we might suspect. Joad Raymond’s excellent monograph, *Milton’s Angels*⁵, demonstrates how, despite angelic imagery retreating with the advancing iconoclasm, angels flourished in pamphlets, devotional works, sermons and poetry, and minority groups of radical Christians experimented with angelic invocations that could fairly be described as ‘occult’.

Angels were central to the teachings of John Pordage (1607-1681), a controversial Anglican mystic, astrologer and alchemist, who founded the Behmenist group, which later became the Philadelphian Society. His son Samuel (1633-1691) described his father’s visionary understanding of angels in an elaborate ‘sacred poem’, *Mundorum Explicatio* (1661) which mapped the soul’s journey towards an angelical state.⁶

During the sixteenth century, guardian angels were a topic for fierce debate.

In *Prosopopoeia Britannica*, George Withers (1558 – 1667) sketches the role of the ‘genius’ as

... an incorporeall creature,
 Consisting of an intellectuall nature ...
 And may be called an Angell, which designeth,
 Adviseth, moveth, draweth, and inclineth
 To happiness; and, naturally restraineth
 From harme ... (1648)⁷



Gustave Dore's 1885 illustration of Satan for Milton's *Paradise Lost*

Milton's monumental poem, *Paradise Lost*, immortalized Satan as the original 'fallen angel', the arrogant master of an unspeakable nether region, for whom there is no prototype in the Hebrew biblical canon, only in extra-canonical books such as the *Book of Enoch*, excluded by early Hebrew redactors.⁸

Swedenborg and Blake

In the eighteenth century, the Swedish engineer Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688–1782) and the English poet and engraver William Blake (1757–1827) announced new visions that assure us the prophetic psyche can always open heavenly

windows. Swedenborg's elaborate descriptions of heavenly kingdoms, found in his magnum opus, *Arcana Coelestia* – the *Heavenly Arcana*, *Heavenly Mysteries*, or *Secrets of Heaven* – describe how angels' lives are similar to our own, tending their gardens and enjoying sex. Heaven is a very real place, not just clouds on a sky-blue background, but with its own roadmaps. Swedenborg's heavenly map influenced Daniel Burnham, who created the street plan for Chicago.⁹



William Blake's *Striding Angel*
[www.williamblake.org]

Blake saw angels as a young child '... a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars'.¹⁰ Later in life, while working on illustrations for another poet, his Lambeth study was filled with a light that declared itself as the Archangel Gabriel.¹¹

Better known for his landscapes, J. W. Turner (1789-1862) bequeathed us a remarkable, luminous and startling image of an *Angel Standing in the Sun*, painted in 1846.

The churches may have shrugged off celestial hierarchies and mediaeval angelologies, and the philosophers may have dismissed John Dee's angelic communications as faux science, but in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the visionaries were still proud of their visions and were determined to communicate them. The sweet and charming angels we see in today's packs of New Age oracle cards are not even hovering in the aether.

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Angel Standing in the Sun, J. W. Turner, 1846.

Part Two will appear in the next *De Numine* issue in Spring 2016

Notes and References for Natural History of Angels

1. The *Book of the Watchers*, which is the first section of the *Book of Enoch*, c.300 BCE, describes the fall of the angels and the arrival of *nephilim*, children of angels and human women. Copies of the *Book of Enoch* were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and, while Enoch had not been included in the Hebrew Bible, it appears to have been a significant text for the Qumran community.
2. The *Fragment of the Book of Noah*, (in the *Book of Enoch*) describes the furore caused by Noah's strange appearance when he was born: 'his body was white as snow and red as the blooming of a rose, and the hair of his head ... and his long locks were white as wool, and his eyes beautiful. And when he opened his eyes, he lighted up the whole house like the sun, and the whole house was very bright.'
This strange baby caused the father, Lamech, to assume he was the child of an angel. This is an early example of the suggestion that angels might appear as pale skinned, with blonde hair.
3. For a breathtaking scholarly account of the ancient flood stories – with delightful, witty interludes – I thoroughly recommend Irving Finkel, the British Museum's chief cuneiformist., *The Ark Before Noah: decoding the Story of the Flood*. After being aware, since 1985, that an interesting tablet was in the possession of a collector, Finkel finally got hold of the Ark tablet in 2009. He was then involved in a reconstruction of the giant coracle. The animals DID go in two by two, according to the Babylonian story!
4. For more on *Angels in Jewish Mysticism*, see my power-point presentation with notes available on the AHRERC website. This is a longer, more detailed version of the paper for the July 8th conference at Lampeter. Further content is available if anyone would like to read my MA dissertation, please email me at admin@theolyn.com.
5. Raymond, (2010)
6. *ibid* pp. 137-146
7. *ibid*: pp.253-4
8. *The Origins of Satan* by Elaine Pagels is an excellent account of the myth of Satan, as he develops from 'adversary', or 'tester', to a full-fledged Prince of Darkness.
9. <http://arcchicago.blogspot.co.uk/2012/09/a-restored-emanuel-swedenborg-returns.html>. Retrieved 10/08/15
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Swedenborg, *Angel in a Garden*
(18th vignette)

William James – philosopher, psychologist, mystic

Part 1: The first 40 years – to 1880

William James was one of the key figures in the history of ideas at the turn of the 20th century, particularly in recognizing the importance of spirituality in complementing the increasing emphasis on scientific materialism. He was born in New York City in 1842, the eldest of five children. Two of his siblings – Henry James Jr., born the following year, and Alice James, the youngest and best known as a diarist – became notable writers. William James was a prolific author himself and his fame rests to a considerable extent on some of these writings, though like Alister Hardy, earlier on his talent as an artist made him consider this as a profession.

William's father, Henry James Sr. was a follower of the Swedish philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg and William's reading of Swedenborg influenced the direction of much of his writing, especially in persuading him, as a rationalist philosopher, to accept the concept and character of the soul. Swedenborg was a successful scientist and inventor; in his mid-50s, he began having mystical experiences. His biographer Lars Bergquist writes that this epiphany occurred over Easter in April 1744 and was affirmed by visions in October of that year. As a result of these visions, Swedenborg abandoned his scientific research and became instead a philosopher, theologian and writer; one of his best-known books, *Heaven and Hell* (1758), is about the afterlife. In another of his books, *The True Christian Religion*, he interprets the Second Coming not as a physical reappearance of Christ on earth, but rather as a time when the whole of humankind becomes imbued with a sense of spirituality – a view similar to those of Richard Bucke's concept of cosmic consciousness and the Omega Point of Teilhard de Chardin. Canadian psychologist Richard Maurice Bucke was a close contemporary of William James. James' best-known book in the field of philosophy of religion is *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, published in 1902, which has mysticism at its very core and which I shall say more about in Part II.

William James was plagued with ill-health throughout his life, though some of his friends felt that many of his illnesses were the psychosomatic delusions of a hypersensitive, multi-faceted but emotionally insecure personality; he was given to frequent bouts of melancholy and depression. As with C.G. Jung, his interest in psychology was probably motivated in part by an attempt to understand and explain his own rather depressed personality. He was a man of medicine and science, but also a philosopher and creative thinker and was somewhat reluctantly led to explore such irrational and 'unscientific' subjects as psychic phenomena and spiritualism. He vacillated between thinking that he could contribute to a 'science of religion' on the one hand, and on the other hand that spiritual experience was forever inaccessible to science, being a purely subjective phenomenon. Here lay the beginnings of James' thoughts on the importance of will. Though he and other members of his family had frequent bouts of depression he was determined that by force of will he could overcome this disposition: 'we ourselves must be our own providence'. His greatest insights seemed to come when he was in the most troubled emotional states.

In 1861, William started at Harvard, where the curriculum was 'largely fixed and uninteresting, consisting mainly of the classics, taught by rote and examined by recitation.' He completed his medical degree – also only examined orally! – in the summer of 1869. However, while he was a student at Harvard, William attended several lectures by the famous Swiss-born American naturalist Louis Agassiz, and in 1865 went on an expedition with him to Brazil on board the steamship *Colorado*. Again we find a parallel with the life of Alister Hardy with his expeditions to the Antarctic aboard *Discovery* and to the Pacific on the

Te Vega.^{*} Agassiz was a noted anti-Darwinian and what would be called today a creationist or follower of 'Intelligent Design', which bears comparison with Hardy's 'Aquatic Ape' hypothesis as an alternative, or at least supplement, to Darwinism. The time that James spent with Agassiz and listening to his lectures may well have provided the inspiration for what was to become a predominant interest in religion, and exploration of the nature of truth, that William James pursued in later life and reflected in his writings.

It was in 1869 that William read and reviewed a book on spiritualism by Epes Sargent called *Planchette or The Despair of Science*, which pointed out the limitations of the materialist world-view of science if it excluded psychic phenomena – a forerunner perhaps of contemporary books by Charles T. Tart and, even more recently, Rupert Sheldrake's *The Science Delusion*. These ideas about a spiritual non-material world presented a challenge to James who was trained as a rationalist and scientist.

William had a close spiritual and emotional relationship with one of his many cousins, Minnie Temple. Minnie unfortunately was as physically fragile as William himself and because of the familial relationship their affectionate feelings for one another could never blossom into marriage. Minnie died aged only twenty-four in 1870, and something of William's spirit died with her. William was eventually to marry Alice Gibbens in 1878. Addressing Minnie posthumously William says: 'Use your death (or your life, it's all one meaning) *tat tvam asi*.' James' biographer Robert D. Richardson comments: 'That last phrase is from the Chandogya Upanishad. It literally means "that you are" and it comes from a passage in which a father is trying to instruct his son about the nature of the ultimate reality of the universe and his son's inescapable place in it.' After this, James became 'more and more interested in religious questions' says Richardson.

William James was one of the 'founding fathers' of the science of psychology. In the 1870s James was lecturing at Harvard in anatomy and physiology, philosophy and psychology. These would be regarded by us today as very different subjects but not so much in the late 19th century. As James was setting up his psychology laboratory at Cambridge, Massachusetts, around 1875, German physician, physiologist and psychologist Wilhelm Wundt was establishing his own laboratory at Leipzig. James and Wundt independently established psychology as a separate and scientific discipline. Wundt had studied under Hermann Helmholtz, best known to us today as the physicist who showed that all forms of energy were equivalent. However, in his day, Helmholtz was thought of equally as a psychologist who first suggested that the unconscious mind interferes with conscious thought processes. 'Unconscious inference' (*unbewusster Schluss*) is a term used in psychology and coined in 1867 by Helmholtz to describe an involuntary, pre-rational and reflex-like mechanism which is part of the formation of visual impressions. It also forms part of James' view of the 'stream of consciousness'.

James was as interested in modern physical sciences as he was in his medical specialisms. In May 1875 he reviewed a book called *The Unseen Universe* by Scottish physicists Balfour Stewart and Peter Guthrie Tait in which they maintained that 'the presumed incompatibility of Science and Religion does not exist'. Furthermore, they suggested that 'the visible system is not the whole universe' and that 'there must be an invisible order of things which will remain and possess energy when the present system has passed away'. This is very close to modern scientific thinking about dark energy and dark matter! The book itself is of great interest to contemporary physicists but, more significant in the context of the life and work of William James, is the fact that it was in this review that he first suggested his ideas on the 'will to believe'. Also of interest to modern physics, James said that because of the diversity of

thought that emerges from the stream of consciousness and the fact that just one explanation or interpretation may not account for all the happenings in the world, we have moved from the belief that we live in a 'universe' to the knowledge that we live in a 'pluriverse' – or 'multiverse' as the modern re-creators of the idea such as John Archibald Wheeler and Hugh Everett describe it. But it was James who coined this term and this concept, albeit in a different context.

William James, together with John Dewey and Charles Peirce, were the creators of the philosophy of pragmatism, which began at Harvard in the 1870s. James wrote a book on the subject that was published in 1907 in which he defined pragmatism thus: 'The pragmatic method ... is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences' or, in other words, the meaning of any expression is to be found in its results rather than in its linguistic origins. Charles Peirce and his father, mathematician Benjamin Peirce, maintained that 'the mystical world ... existed in the natural world and was experienced there'. So to describe spiritualism as 'paranormal' or 'supernatural' is not really accurate, though such events are not ubiquitous in our everyday world.

In response to his reading of an article on mind by Herbert Spencer, James says that 'rationality is itself a feeling or emotion ... not a matter of logic or math ... not induction, deduction or syllogism, not something higher than and detached from the senses ...'. We meet this notion again in the latter half of the century with the work of the American philosopher Robert C. Solomon who equates passion or emotion with judgement to form the 'meaning of life'.

While still supervising work in the psychology laboratory William James was appointed assistant professor in philosophy at Harvard in 1880. It was in this atmosphere that James wrote a psychological paper for the January 1884 issue of *Mind, the Quarterly Journal of Psychology and Philosophy*. The paper had the cumbersome title 'On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology' but it contained the conceptual nugget 'that consciousness is not a state or a sum of impressions, not a pool or a reservoir, but a stream.' This recalls the ideas of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus about our being unable to step into the same river twice. The concept of a 'stream of consciousness' is one of the seminal visions of William James: '*No state of consciousness, once gone, can recur and be identical with what it was before*' (italics his) or, as Henri Bergson put it, 'History does not repeat itself'.

In Cambridge (Mass.) in the 1880s there was great enthusiasm for the writings of G.W.F. Hegel who died fifty years earlier. Hegel believed that society was shaped by a communal ethos he called *Geist*. The history of civilization reflected swings in the prevailing tenor of society represented by *Geist*. James believed none of this, but that changes in society were wrought by inspired individuals – closer to the Nietzschean *Urbemensch* concept. Despite his opposition to Hegelian ideas, James writes:

The most violent revolutions in an individual's beliefs leave most of his old order standing. Time and space, cause and effect, nature and history, and one's own biography remain untouched. New truth is always a go-between, a smoother-over of transitions. It marries old opinion to new fact so as ever to show a minimum of jolt, a maximum of continuity.

This is the idea of Hegelian 'synthesis' that shapes the path of human history. James regarded pragmatism as the 'the most inspiring attitude we can have ... the common denominator to which all the forms of human life can be reduced'. In his comment on the individual in society James said: 'The community stagnates without the impulse of the individual; the impulse dies away without the sympathy of the community.'

Thus William James contributed many key ideas in philosophy and psychology – ideas that others have applied and developed during the 20th century. In Part 2 we shall look at the equally fruitful latter half of his life.

Howard Jones

* See Ben Korgen's account of the voyage of the *Te Vega* in Issues 40, 42-46.

See also Howard Jones's book review on page 36. (Ed.)

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REPORTS

AHSSSE - Change of Status

I made reference in my View from the Chair's report to a change of status regarding the Society and am keen to inform members about the details and implications.

Briefly, the Alister Hardy Trust are working with the Charity Commission to seek a new deed of incorporation and part of that process involves the AHSSSE which is under the auspices of the Trust. The proposal put forward by the Charity Commission is essentially a choice between the Society becoming a full part of – and under the direct control of – the Alister Hardy Trust, or taking the alternative option of becoming a fully separate entity with no formal links to the Trust or RERC (necessitating the need to set up the Society as a separate independent charity).

At a recent Trustees' meeting a lengthy discussion took place where both options were fully aired, and Trustees had the benefit of expert advice from the solicitor employed by the Trust to bring about the legal changes; he was also able to answer questions and clarify the points raised. Following the discussion a vote was taken and the option for full incorporation into the Trust was selected on a majority.

In practical terms there will be very little immediate change to the running of the Society. I have undertaken to work with David Greenwood and the solicitor to bring about the necessary changes required to conform with the requirements of the Charity Commission.

In the long term I believe that the Society will greatly benefit from the change for the following reasons:

- It will be fully under the umbrella of the Alister Hardy Trust, removing the current ambiguity whereby the Society is separate from but under the direction of the Trust.
- Members will have a right to nominate and vote for *some* of the Trustees and attend the AGM.
- Members' subscriptions will continue to support the work of the Trust and fund Group activities, as indeed they do now.

- *De Numine* will continue as the journal of the AHSSSE.
- The Society will be placed on a firm legal basis for the future.
- Finally, when the Society as it is now is formally wound up, the posts of Chair, Vice Chair and Honorary Secretary will no longer be required. However, it is likely that a small 'management team' will be required to run the day to day business of the Society and it will be for the Trustees to appoint such a team and decide the terms of reference.

In summary, we are at the very early stages of working through the necessary legal process to bring about the change, and at some point the Society in its current form will have to be formally wound up by a resolution in order to then become part of the Alister Hardy Trust. It may be appropriate to do this at the AGM in October this year; however, the time frame will be very much dependent on how quickly the process goes through in conjunction with the Charity Commission.

I will of course keep members updated as the process moves forward.

Andrew Burns, Chair, AHSSSE

RERC News

Annual RERC Conference: The Study of Angels



On 3rd July 2015 the second annual one-day conference of the Religious Experience Research Centre, with TRIS, was held in the Founder's Library at the Lampeter campus, University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Once again the event was well worth the trek for those of us who live far away and was very well attended by the local AHSSSE members and Trinity Saint David students.

The Study of Angels day began with the most fascinating second annual Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture given by Revd. Professor June Boyce-Tillman of the University of Winchester. Her title was 'Crystallizing the

Angels – A methodological proposal for the study of angels'. She set the scene for a day of reflection on angels and how they have been perceived and portrayed throughout the ages, not just in texts but also in art and music. June began by singing the haunting 'Song of the Angels'¹. I wondered whether other AHSSSE members who were unable to attend the day might be able to enjoy this lecture another time perhaps.

There was an impressive line-up of other speakers: Prof Martin O’Kane on ‘Painting the Bodiless: Angels in Biblical Art’; Prof Densil Morgan on ‘The most extensive study of angelology since Thomas Aquinas: Karl Barth on angels’; Dr Katrin Williams spoke on ‘Angel(s) in Ancient Judaism and Johannine Christianity’; Theolyn Cortens on ‘Angels in Jewish Mysticism’; Dr David Morgans asked *Are there Angels in Buddhism?* And finally Dr Gary Bunt told us about *The Jinn in the Machine: Approaching Jinn and Angels in Islam*. As is evident, the talks were wide-ranging over time and across different religious traditions.



Dr David Morgans

It was a rich day and I certainly learned a great deal in a most entertaining manner. I also felt humbled as I hadn’t realized just how much scholarship there is surrounding angels.

Marianne Rankin
AHT/SSSE Director of Communications

¹ The Song of the Angels

The **Sanctus** is found regularly in the consecration prayer at the Christian Eucharist. It appeared in this prayer in about the first half of the fifth century; but the song is much older. The first line is the hymn of the great seraphim angels in the book of Isaiah 6:3; so its origin is Jewish. It is echoed in the New Testament in the Book of Revelation 4:8. So for thousands of years it has represented the praise of angels for at least two great faiths – Judaism and Christianity

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus
Dominus Deus
Sabaoth
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.
Hosanna in excelsis.

Translated it is

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God of Hosts
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest

When we sing it we join with the angels as we view God’s glory along with many Christians and Jews across the world and the ages.

Revd Professor June Boyce-Tillman



RERC Traineeship and Research Placement with the Erasmus+ Programme

My academic background is MSc in mathematics and MA in international economics. I am PhD student in philosophy at Maria Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin, Poland. I have submitted the PhD thesis 'Consciousness and Its Evolution: From a Human-Being to a Post-Human' (in the English language) and will probably defend it in October 2015. My thesis is about philosophy in religion and experimental philosophy, and deals with mystical and religious experience and its interpretation. Experimental philosophy is an emerging field that appeared around the year 2000. My experiment concerns the exploration of consciousness and its evolution. The constitution of a human being is at least threefold: consciousness (soul, spirit), mind, and body; consciousness (soul, spirit) is the most essential part of a person. My hypothesis is that some time after a person has carried out three stages of this experiment in consciousness the person's body may not have any significant changes for a long period, i.e. it may not change with the passing of time. When this stage is reached there has been an evolutionary development from from a human being to post-human.

The experiment is conducted mostly in the shamanic state of consciousness.; the shamanic journey and spirit embodiment (see below) are in my view the best way of carrying out these experiments. In a normal state of consciousness, the majority of the streams of consciousness go through the body; in a shamanic state of consciousness, the majority of the streams of consciousness appear to be in the field of consciousnesses (souls, spirits). In a shamanic journey it is possible to direct the streams of consciousness, for example, towards the third eye chakra of another person at a distance. A shaman is a person for whom it is easy to switch from the normal to the altered (shamanic) state of consciousness and back.*

In December 2014 I approached the Director of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, Professor Bettina Schmidt about the possibility of a traineeship at the AHRERC.and asked Professor Schmidt to be my mentor. It was a nice surprise for me when I was given the Erasmus+ grant for 3 months; the grant did not provide any money for my mentor. I became a member of the Alister Hardy Society for the Study of Spiritual Experience and received access to the online database of accounts of religious and spiritual experience. I was helped to access the accounts by the archive supervisor Jean Matthews, and typed a few of them up under her supervision. Some of the accounts were useful for my research, as were some of the AHRERC library books, which I found in the main library with the help of the librarian Thomas Pitchford. I also took the opportunity to look through PhD theses defended in the United Kingdom, and particularly at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

For the first time I met students in religious studies and philosophy at a seminar of philosophy and religious studies on 22nd April 2015. The discussion at this seminar was focused around my research on shamanism, and Tamzin Powell's thesis on paganism. Tamzin had just completed an MPhil in anthropology with a thesis on paganism, and practises paganism herself. We both spoke about our research and I presented my research project 'Relationships with Spirits'. Later Tamzin Powell gave me some help with the practical skills necessary for fieldwork research and told me that the environment around Lampeter would in her opinion promote research in shamanism.

I also made a presentation at the Philosophy and Religious Studies colloquium. The presentation 'Consciousness and Its Evolution: from a Human Being to a Post-Human' was based on my research conducted in the years 2001-2014 and my PhD thesis presented at the Maria Curie-Sklodowska University in Lublin, Poland; and my research in shamanism (including experiments) at the Lampeter campus, University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The presentation was 45 minutes and the discussion, which was very interesting and fruitful, lasted 60 minutes.



Taras Handziy presenting his work at Lampeter, with Professor Bettina Schmidt

I also attended the 2015 Graduate Summer School where I gained valuable information on preparing for and undergoing a viva, getting the paper and thesis published, second language in research, and opportunities of finding a job in the United Kingdom. Towards the end of my stay I attended the RERC conference on the Academic Study of Angels, which I very much enjoyed. I have had several fruitful meetings with my mentor Professor Schmidt where we discussed different questions concerning my research and methodology. It appeared to me that experimental philosophy and shamanism might have similar methods of research. Professor Schmidt has always done her best for my traineeship and research, and I tried to use all the opportunities I have been given during my stay here.

My fieldwork in the area of Lampeter has included a shaman's work. A shamanic journey and spirit embodiment are two poles and methods of activities in the shamanic states of consciousness. The spirit embodiment was with my protecting spirit Avatar of Synthesis. For those who would like to know more about the spirit, the Avatar of Synthesis has been described in Alice Bailey's books. The shamanic journeys were to Poland and Ukraine (I am a citizen of Ukraine), and the United States. But mostly my shamanic journeys were inside the United Kingdom.

My shaman's work has also included time slip experiments (into the future). Time slip is a kind of time travel when a person's body does not travel in time, but the soul travels. The years of time slip into the future were 2035 and 2065. The main idea of time slip experiments is to achieve spirit embodiment while being in some year in the future when it is necessary to concentrate on this episode. I consider that nearly all my experiments in shamanism, i.e. shamanic journey, spirit embodiment, and time slip were successful. At present I could not provide evidence for this, I know and feel it intuitively. It seems the evidence may appear later. Also I feel that the experiments have probably influenced some realities in the physical world.

I have discussed the elements of shamanism with a few people in Lampeter, and I have conducted a training in 'Elements of Shamanism' on Facebook. My methodology for this concerns how it is possible to appear in the 'spirit world'. It includes work with mind, feelings, visualization, and concentration. I also have also developed a theoretical approach to the shaman's world and spirit world. I also informed my Facebook friends about different things that could happen in the spirit world.

I am amazed how it is possible to develop the inner self in the United Kingdom. I am not sure if it is possible to do it in such way in any other part of Europe or the world. Although this was not my first research visit to the United Kingdom – I have been earlier at conferences and

conducted different experiments – it is the first time I stayed for a long period of time. Once again I have received the pleasant cultural shock how the United Kingdom promotes development of new ideas.

I would like to thank my mentor Professor Bettina Schmidt, archive supervisor Jean Matthews, and librarian Thomas Pitchford, who all helped me so much during my stay. Also I would like to thank the many other people who helped me to carry out this traineeship and my research.

Taras Handziy

* Taras' thesis involves Planckian quantum physics, mathematical formulae and theosophy, as well as shamanism – a breathtakingly broad approach, so please see his power point presentation if you would like to know more about this original and exciting research:

<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/47489653/Philosophy%20and%20Religious%20Studies%20Colloquium%20-%20Taras%20Handziy.ppt>

or you can contact him by email: taras.handziy@gmail.com (Ed.)

AHSSSE Llantarnam Gathering 2015 **'Crossing Boundaries'; Llantarnam Abbey,** **24 – 26 July 2015**



This year a smaller group arrived throughout Friday afternoon, wet and exhausted; nearly all of us had encountered delays and traffic jams on our journey though torrential rain and wild winds. Llantarnam was of course as welcoming as ever, and the opening ceremony was also, for the most part, pleasingly familiar. After supper however, although we enjoyed Mary's and Alan's short presentations, exhaustion took over and the circle dance that had been planned was just a few steps too far.

The following report is made up of individual feedback, and some discussion of the issues that arose when we ventured into crossing boundaries ...

Mary Cook:

The subject for this year's Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey, though deliberately wide, was taken from Jonathan Robinson's book, *Crossing boundaries* which was reviewed in last Spring's *De Numine*. We were introduced to the weekend by Patricia Murphy, and as usual invited to place on our central table the object we were asked to bring along that would suggest a 'crossing boundaries' significance within our lives, and to share that significance with the group. The evening's presentation was a general introduction by Mary, then Alan Underwood, to the multiplicities and complexities of 'boundaries'. It had been conceived to lead into a deepening of the sharing we had begun in the afternoon. Perhaps though because of the stressed nature of our journeys, most didn't join in this.

On Saturday morning Andy Burns gave an illustrated talk on Alister Hardy's sketch book of the Cotswolds. I was amazed by the quality of the art, its detail and general feel, also by the fact that

Andy had researched the places Hardy visited, and photographed the scenes sketched. He certainly inspired us to explore the Cotswolds for ourselves. As the sun deigned to shine, we re-jigged our programme, giving us the opportunity to be out in the garden and to walk the labyrinth if we felt moved to do so. The afternoon was devoted to an enhanced reading of Lessing's play *Nathan the Wise**. Before lunch I announced the casting, and matched the characters with their costumes – for which much thanks to the Newport Interfaith Group (NIG) which also lent us the books. A buzz of enthusiasm permeated the atmosphere, and was to continue throughout the performance. During the last scene, our Muslim friend Sughra Muhammed and another member of the NIG joined us. I was very pleased at this overlap as they had both taken part in the play when the NIG group read it last November! This led – after tea – into Mrs. Muhammed giving us a short talk on her experience of the Hajj.

After dinner Natalie Tobert gave an illustrated talk on her research in India. She highlighted the different approach to mental health among that population, how when one person visits the psychiatrist, their whole extended family may attend too. There is a feeling that the health of one family member is very much a concern of the whole family. She sought ways to relate and make use of the Indian approach here in Britain, especially with the multi-cultural population in the area of London where she works.

On the Sunday, Trudy Porter gave a talk entitled 'A point in time through boundary walls', in which she showed through her photography how Time is a boundary – with walls through which we might glimpse something of the past. The mediaeval Spanish church she focused on had changed religious affinity – albeit always Christian – through time. One shot showed walls entirely constructed with human bones, over which was the legend 'These bones await your own'!

During the plenary session we were reminded that Alister Hardy's famous Question received many more responses from the general public than from the church-goers, and we questioned ourselves about whether the Society was viewed too much as a religious body. From my own experience of a lifetime of trying to make links with others who have a spiritual resonance with myself, I find that almost all of these have no affinity with a religious institution, though religious influence in general cannot be altogether denied. We agreed to meet again next year at Llantarnam Abbey despite there being less available accommodation than previously. The place has wound itself around our hearts!

* *Nathan the Wise* was written by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1779, but set in the time of the Crusades. It is a fervent plea for religious tolerance. Its performance was forbidden by the Church during Lessing's lifetime. (Ed.)

John Franklin:

The weekend Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey this year was as enjoyable as ever, splendidly organised and run by Mary Cook and Patricia Murphy, and with contributions from Jonathan Robinson, Alan Underwood and Natalie Tobert. It was good to meet up with old friends again and meet new members. The hospitality of the nuns was as warm as ever, the food and service excellent; and refurbished accommodation provided the luxury of *en suite* bathroom facilities enhancing the pleasures of the stay. It is only a pity that more members didn't avail themselves of the opportunity to participate this year. I am really looking forward to next year at Llantarnam ...

Eilean Lavelle, coming for the first time to Llantarnam:

Llantarnam Abbey was a welcome retreat. The walled garden and accommodation effused peace, freeing us from all our normal clutter. All preparations including food had been made with love. I am so grateful we were given the option of attending Mass with the gentle Sisters in the chapel which I, though not Catholic, regarded an honour.

The programme included diverse elements. Sughra Muhammed's description of the Hajj illustrated the pulling strength of traditional roots which, as a Scot, I empathised with. The pilgrimage did reveal aspects of exclusivity compared to the acceptance of religious diversity in this country. Dr Natalie Tobert gave a talk 'Physicians at the boundary's edge' introducing her book *Spiritual Psychiatries*, a



Members of the group with this year's mandala

presentation of her knowledge and experience gained while travelling through India. She found that medical treatments are generally holistically administered by specialists in a variety of fields. A Mandala was delicately created by found objects. I suggested sketching in a *vesica piscis* offering an explanation of its Christian symbolism: that the two intersecting circles represent the overlap of the divinity and humanity of Christ. The reading of G.E. Lessings' play 'Nathan the Wise' was a brilliant method of sharing and really well cast, the comedy being heightened by the variety of

accents. However, the three hours it took to read through was challenging for the cast and myself as audience. Whilst interesting, the presentation by Andy Burns on the art of Alister Hardy was a repeat of that given on the last Open Day in Oxford. I have always found music and dance formative of spiritual training but had wondered how circle dances could possibly be choreographed spontaneously for a group differing in age, ability and stage of spiritual journey. To my enjoyment, through the guidance of Mary and Jonathan, it all worked out harmoniously.

Two very different attitudes to religion and spirituality begin to emerge above, which to me illustrate the polarities that developed and were explored during the weekend. The consensus was to gather again next year, and continue the theme as 'Boundaries and Beyond'. I personally would like to focus on the experiential in the context of religion and spirituality, as the boundary between religion and spirituality emerged quite strongly, and centred to a significant degree on the collective experience of ritual/ceremony in organised religion, contrasted with personal, individual spiritual experience.



Mary put it like this:

I think there is a great gulf between what some of us call 'spiritual' and what others do. To me spiritual is a dimension of our lives totally other than our physical rational lives – way beyond. It is with us, part of us but completely independent of our usual understanding. It is this that makes it so compulsive – and research into spiritual experience is cutting edge exploration. Religion is very much involved in this in a way I don't understand; ritual is necessary for some, I will admit, probably for us all, unknowingly. When our everyday selves are put to one side – so to speak, the Spiritual can speak through.

Alan Underwood agreed:

Llantarnam Abbey is a lovely place to visit but having attended for five years running in, I now feel that there needs to be some change of format and content if the place, and the Annual Gathering, are to call me back next year. What new elements might call me back? Primarily a clear focus on spiritual experiences rather than religious forms. The less ritual and ceremony the better from my point of view.

Jonathan Robinson, who led us in liturgies from his new publication *Crossing Boundaries* is definitely in the 'ceremonial' camp:

A good weekend which I enjoyed, and I think participants tried to avoid promoting their own brand of spirituality/religion in the various presentations. I do agree we could have gone further in exploring what it means for ourselves to cross boundaries. If we start with ourselves we may be of more use to others!

So here are a few thoughts:

- How aware are we of our own boundaries? To what extent do we form boundaries through culture, previous experiences, associations, prejudices etc.?
- How can we begin to 'blur' our boundaries, as we seek to understand, empathise and connect with others? (where the 2 circles of the *vesica piscis* begin to overlap?)
- To what extent is this 'a good thing'?
- To what extent can rituals and ceremonies help? What is a ritual? Surely so much of life is made up of conscious or unconscious rituals, from shaking hands to cleaning our teeth? Are rituals 'a doorway to the beyond'?
- To what extent in our individualistic and pluralistic society can we create situations for spiritual sharing, free from religious and cultural contexts? But then, can situations for spiritual sharing be helped by religious or cultural belonging?
- Are we only interested in spiritual experience as an individual experience? Is there not a danger that this can become self-indulgent?
- To what extent do we project boundaries on to each other, make assumptions which are not actually true? (e.g. that a priest holds particular beliefs, or understands words in a particular way)
- Crossing boundaries may involve risks and making ourselves vulnerable. Are we prepared for this?
- Lastly, we often create boundaries to reinforce our own sense of ego and identity. Spirituality in its best sense is surely about letting go and being open to each other as we reach out in love.

I guess this is enough! I will be very happy to share with a group next year and further explore these issues. It could provide a good basis for a balance between academic interest and practical action.

As mentioned above, the boundary between spirituality and religion was certainly more of an issue than the boundaries between different faiths and denominations, although the latter was the theme of 'Nathan the Wise', the play reading organised by Mary on Saturday afternoon. This was much enjoyed by us all, so much so that the finale, when religious affiliations were revealed and boundaries dissolved in mutual joy and recognition, meant, I think, by the dramatist to be a solemn and intense scene, had us all giggling with pleasure and overacting like mad.

On a more serious note, we had a breakthrough on Sunday morning when people stopped skirting around boundaries and took the risk of speaking honestly. Some people went to Mass with the sisters, for the rest the conversation crystalised around a very important boundary that had, as Louis said, been avoided in discussion until then. Ritual and ceremony were felt to be an integral part of the religious institution(s) that have been rejected by those who had left the fold so to speak, and as such seemed to cause some discomfort. I hadn't realised the degree of resistance some people would feel to the idea of anything resembling a church service, Jonathan's liturgies form 'Crossing Boundaries' being a case in point – to me taking part in the morning and evening ceremonies he conducted was pleasant and spiritually satisfying, but I do see in retrospect how, in following the pattern of conventional church services, they were reminiscent, for those who have chosen an individual spiritual path, of the institutions they had left behind. Those who felt resistance joined in out of politeness, as Alan said he did, and found unexpectedly positive results:

Andy: I expected the dance to be difficult but I enjoyed it.

Or not:

Ken: I changed the words for the oil blessing, I didn't want to do it like that.

I do feel this politeness was extended by all of us to the other forms of ritual we usually engage in at the Gathering, such as singing grace and circle dancing, both of which I always join in out of politeness, and, like Andy, find I quite enjoy in ways I hadn't expected. The boundaries between politeness, diplomacy and hypocrisy occurred to me then. Jonathan feels

his liturgy breaks boundaries because the word God is replaced by Spirit, but Louis argued that there was more to crossing boundaries than changing liturgy – ‘from time to time we change our table manners, our plumbing and our god’.

Things became distinctly sticky; I didn’t realise boundaries as a subject would bring up personal barriers – silly me. But there was a sense by Sunday that boundaries were at least being acknowledged at last, if not actually crossed ...

Louis Friedman:

After two days at Llantarnam I found to my surprise few boundaries had been crossed. For me the comfortable view from our ivory tower became very uncomfortable.

Boundaries not to cross
Boundaries never to cross
Barriers to boundaries
Skirting around boundaries

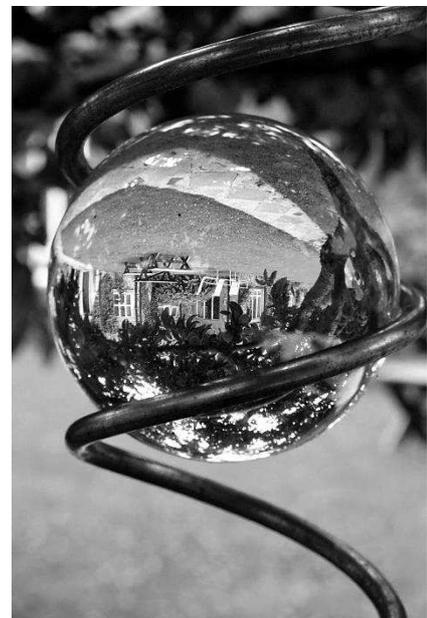
But crossing boundaries [for real] is accepting risk, some examples: the Pope’s encyclical on the environment; soldiers leaving the trenches on both sides on Christmas Eve to play football in no man’s land. Crossing/breaking boundaries can be risky and sometimes not very polite, like immigrants attempting to cross boundaries into Fortress Europe. Things are changing; the whole world is on the move, not through choice but of necessity. We need to meet at the boundaries and help, not hide in our ivory towers.

By the end of our time at Llantarnam Abbey we had crossed a small boundary (of communication) and had actually engaged with each other. The logical outcome was the decision to make the theme of next year’s gathering ‘Boundaries and Beyond’.

Alan:

Reflections on the weekend: It was imperceptible at first but then, on moving shoreward, grew in vigour. It rose wave-like and stealthily rolled, moved on, eventually to break, all twinkling points of sparkling white and pearly spume, upon that shore – the Gathering’s collective consciousness. What frothy surprise of mixed dimensions and stirred perspectives have we here? Boundaries entwined in a chaotic dance above the waves. ‘At last!’ they cried. Now – to Boundaries and Beyond.

Compiled by Patricia Murphy



Reports from the Local Groups

AHSSSE/SMN conference, 27th June 2015, held at the Catholic Chaplaincy in St Aldates, Oxford

The Scientific and Medical Network joined with the AHSSSE in an Open Dialogue on the theme, *Science, Religion and Spirituality: Moving towards a Post-Materialist Paradigm?*

The speakers were Professor Bernard Carr, Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy at Queen Mary University, Chairman of the SMN, and author of *Universe or Multiverse?* (CUP, 2007); and Professor Jeff Astley, Hon. Professor, Department of Theology and Religion and Professional Fellow of St. Chads College Durham University and Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience at Glyndwr University, Wrexham. The day was opened by Rhonda Riachi and Rowena Rudkin, the Chairs of the AHSSSE Oxford & Cotswold Group and London Group respectively, who welcomed the speakers, the Chairs for the day, Dr. Peter Fenwick and Andrew Burns, AHSSSE Chair, and guests.

The conference was based on a report, a *Manifesto for a Post-Materialist Science*, which resulted from the findings of a group of internationally known scientists from a variety of scientific fields, who had come together to challenge the materialist worldview at an International Summit on Post-Materialist Science in February 2014. This summary report asserted that mind represents an aspect of reality as primordial as the physical world, is fundamental in the universe, and cannot be derived from matter and reduced to anything more basic; that minds are apparently unbounded, and may unite in ways suggesting a unitary one Mind that includes all individual, single minds; that the evidence suggests the survival of consciousness following bodily death; and 'that scientists should not be afraid to investigate spirituality and spiritual experiences since they represent a central aspect of human existence'. This was the view of Sir Alister Hardy FRS, which led to his founding of the Religious Experience Research Centres that bear his name. (The conclusions of the International Summit were published in the Scientific & Medical Network Journal, Network Review, Summer 2014.)

Speaking first, Professor Jeff Astley in his talk 'Beyond Science and Nature? Beyond Belief?' explored what has been called 'The New Frontier of Religion and Science' – the territory marked out by developments in neuroscience and by the metaphysical and theological claims about the non-material and transcendence. He related this debate to arguments about the nature of spiritual and religious experience, and other challenges posed by reductionist interpretations of science,

Bernard Carr, in an illustrated talk which followed, 'Can Science Accommodate Mind and Spirituality?' argued that indeed it should. Modern physics claims to be close to a 'Theory of Everything' and this would underlie all science in a reductionist perspective. But this neglects consciousness; mental and spiritual phenomena are usually assumed to be beyond science. Nonetheless, indications from physics itself suggest that consciousness is a fundamental rather than incidental feature of the world, and that some sort of post-materialist scientific paradigm is required to accommodate this.

The talks were followed by a dialogue between the two speakers in which they questioned each other on points of relevance, ending up agreeing that a post-materialist scientific paradigm and a change of perspective is required.

The afternoon was open to questions and contributions from the floor, put to a Panel comprising the two speakers and Dr. Peter Fenwick and Andrew Burns. Led and chaired by Dr. Fenwick, a most stimulating and interesting discussion ensued.

Detailed notes are available of Professor Astley's and Professor Carr's talks and the dialogue and question and discussion period which followed, together with PDF of the PowerPoint presentation accompanying Professor Carr's talk. These can be obtained on request from John Franklin, 21 Park Vista, Greenwich, London, SE10 9LZ; e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com (free if by e-mail, £1.50 otherwise to cover cost of printing and postage: the PowerPoint presentation is only available by e-mail). See the AHSSSE website for links.

John Franklin, Hon Secretary AHSSSE.

Oxford/Cotswold Group:

The group has been in the process of changing hands and several events are being planned as well as a social afternoon session next month to meet and discuss what might be of interest. Suggestions are very welcome.

Tanya Garland

tanya.garland.37@gmail.com Tel. 01865 244260

South East Wales Group

Outing to Lydney Park, 3rd June 2015

Our outing, originally planned for April 29th, and postponed due to a very extreme weather forecast, took place on a beautiful mid-summer day. Lydney Park is a private home, open to the public twice a week during Spring, and our day was their final open day of the year. Rhododendrons of amazing size and varieties – they were Lord Bledisloe's great passion – filled the secluded and peaceful valley which we had chosen to visit because of the association with the Celtic god of water, Nodens, referred to in our elemental talk on 'water'*. 



A Roman temple and baths complex is located at the top of the hill on the opposite side of the valley to the house. Its architecture is a strange Romano-Celtic hybrid, as indeed is the dedication of a Roman temple to a Celtic god! (The site's excavation was undertaken by Sir Mortimer Wheeler in 1928, and one of his assistants was the young Professor J. R. R. Tolkien.) As well as Nodens being the 'Lord of the Iron Mines', some of which were close by, he was linked with the River Severn, which the temple overlooks, and with fishing. He was also associated

with healing (and withholding healing from wrong-doers). There was a 130 foot long building consisting of several small rooms with mosaic floors, known as an *Abaton* which, it is suggested, was a dormitory for people seeking inspired dreams. It lies within the *temenos*, the religious precinct.

Also close by is a hill fort dating back to 100 BC. It is in the deer park, and also overlooks the Severn where there would probably have been a ford or a ferry crossing. Many old trees near the fort were full of character, and imaginations soared!



*see issue 58, pp. 27-28

'Science and Religion', 18th June 2015

Alan Underwood led us on a journey through time beginning with the Ancient Greeks. We were searching out 'scientists' through the ages whose names and works have passed down to us for posterity. They were all original thinkers, and as far as we know they lived, and adhered to, the religious nature of their society. Their drive to search the Great Truths, understand the workings of the natural world and push forward the boundaries of knowledge was fundamental to them all.

By Galileo's time it was becoming increasingly difficult to marry experimental findings with those of conventionally accepted Truth, which by the nature of the period, meant that of the Christian church. Galileo worked within the Church's strict boundaries, but struggled to do so. *How could he pretend to be denying what he had seen with his own eyes?* Newton too, was 'Christian', but only within the bounds of his own wisdom and understanding. A problematic rift had developed between the religious establishment and scientific inquiry.

This rift persists to the present day, though with the coming of the quantum world, the boundaries are becoming rather blurred. When is the table a solid object for our cups, and when is it observed to be a 'shadow' of emptiness? Where is the divide between matter and pure energy?

In the ensuing lively discussion, the world of the experiential spirituality came in. To me this fell between the crack – neither science nor religion. The spiritual isn't matter, it isn't energy. *Or is it?* So how could the 'spiritual' possibly be studied scientifically when in a group such as ours, it is accepted from the beginning that each person's experiences are unique, and cannot be completely understood by any other. This is true of even the ordinary day-to-day experience of life, let alone the life-changing insights and experiences we call spiritual.

I mentioned an occasion when on entering a chapel in the Pennines I immediately went very cold, and felt a sense of dread. So much so that I had to leave. Later in our hotel, I read that there had been a massacre of 70 people in that chapel during the Civil War. Could it be that those people's great fear could have been stored in the stones of the building itself – in the actual crystals of the granite building stones? Today our everyday life relies on information stored in (silicon) crystals, so why not? If so, what I felt there – the dreadful experiencing of the slaughter – was not necessarily spiritual in nature (though it might have been) but perhaps a heightened sensitivity to these 350 year-old emotions. Wouldn't that be material for an in-depth scientific study?

Mary Cook

Congratulations



to David Greenwood on his Doctorate, which he was awarded this summer. Those members who attended Open Day last year will remember the talk he gave, based on his research; for those who could not attend he sent *De Numine* his abstract, from which I have taken the brief description of his subject below. I very much hope we can expect an article from Dr Greenwood for *De Numine* next year on this fascinating subject. (Ed.)

The numinous in art: a philosophical art historical and theological study

This thesis embraces the disciplines of philosophy, art history and practical theology. It is concerned with the ways in which artists have endeavoured to express the numinous or point towards the Transcendent through landscape painting. The Transcendent is described as that recognition in mankind of the capacity of knowing truth intuitively, or of attaining a scientific knowledge of an order of existence *transcending* the reach of the senses, and of which we can have no sensible experience.

I argue that some artists express their view of God through their images, producing hieroglyphs, divine images which can induce mystical experiences in the mind of the viewer and could be used as aids to devotion with some even being regarded as sacred. A discussion of religious experience and trigger factors is included, embracing the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto. The works of a number of artists have been considered but special emphasis is given to Samuel Palmer and Caspar David Friedrich.

Dr David Greenwood



Congratulations also to Aled Thomas and his wife Victoria, seen here on 3rd August, their wedding day. Aled is a member of the Society and on the AHSSSE Committee



Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your excellent review of my book, 'Grail Alchemy' in the Spring edition of *De Numine*. I would like to respond to one of the footnotes in which you state that I make an error by referring to Safed as 'a holy city in Acre,' whereas Acre was actually another city. However, Professor James Carley uses this phrase in his translation of the *Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, which is the standard version of this manuscript. Further research suggests that Acre was indeed the name of a kingdom held by the Crusaders, as well as that of its capital city. The Kingdom of Acre was known as the Second Kingdom (following the First Kingdom, the Kingdom of Jerusalem) from 1191-1291.

Yours Sincerely,

Mara Freeman

Yes, of course you are right. I have found references to land held by the crusaders with Acre as the capital in this period. So we are both right, as for most of its history before and after this period, Acre has been a fortified city, as it is now. Thank you so much for writing in to the letters page. (Ed.)

To the Editor:

Back to Basics

'Have you ever been aware of, or influenced by, a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which was different from your everyday self?' (Alister Hardy's question, which was made public at the beginning of his formal research into religious experience).

Alister Hardy initially targeted church groups through their magazines – and got a mere 200 replies. Newspaper ads in the Observer, the Guardian and the Daily Mail in 1969 resulted in a wealth of over 4,000 first-hand accounts of spiritual experiences that were to form the beginnings of the archive held by the RERC at Lampeter.

The work continues to flourish, and is casting ever wider nets, indeed, even beyond our shores and religious culture. As a general rule it is found that somewhere between 60% and 70% of those questioned have experienced at least one aspect of the Spiritual. But of these, few would call themselves religious. Spiritual, maybe, but not religious. Church gets in the

way. In John Keeble's book *This Unnamed Something* the question is posed: What kind of person might be expected not to have a religious experience? The answer 'Churchgoers' was received. 'They have a dried up vision of life'. Seeking the kingdom of heaven does not need a church community.

Once one has experienced the presence of the Spiritual – felt, or heard, or seen – doubt disappears. And the archive shows that these are not sought experiences, but for the greater part, come 'out of the blue'. Jesus said, 'God is Spirit. Seek in spirit and in truth.'

But we are in the realm of deep personal experience here, and because this cannot be shared, it cannot be proved – though this might be changing with recent work. But the statistics of research material from very many researchers throughout the world cannot be denied, The Spiritual is here, and now.

It is a startling thought that those who know that the Spiritual exists avoid religion, and those who attend churches and religious societies are it seems, the doubters. The 'pearl of great price' cannot be shared. But it revolutionises life.

Quakers value personal experience – we say – and encourage the sharing. Fox knew 'experimentally' (experientially) yet those of us within the Society who also know in this way, seem not to be encouraged to speak out. If there is a church or religious society that should welcome such people, surely it should be Quakers!

Thank you, Harry Underhill for your letter in *The Friend* of 8th October which prompted this.

Mary Cook

To the Editor:

Reflections on the Annual Gathering at Llantarnam July 2015:

I foresaw an 'Annual Gathering of the AHSSSE' as a celebratory massing (like a gathering of the clans) of most of its members at the end of the season. Only thirteen, at most, of the approximately two hundred and fifty members, attended. None presented any specifically religious experience apart from myself and two lacked respect for any religious aspect of the spiritual. Only three of the members including myself opted to join the nuns at Mass. I had joined the Society in order to follow through my own religious experience and gain more insight into the workings of the Holy Spirit. In view of the Society having changed its identity somewhat from being for the study of 'religious' experience to that of 'spiritual' experience, I felt a great need for 'Spirituality' to be carefully defined for its members. It seems such a wide umbrella term which may extend to cover the occult which was a boundary I had no wish to cross.

The title theme 'Crossing Boundaries', after the recent publication by Jonathan Robinson, appealed to me because it seemed to blend with my prayer offered to my local Inter-Faith group, that the aim of exploring our differences might be to distil our commonalities. I am interested in the creation of a liturgy formed from this distillation, in which people of all beliefs and practices could share in spiritual union. However, I also see cross-cultural boundaries, all too often territorial barricades, as an opportunity for joyful celebration of difference. It would appear that in order to share inter-faithfully in the spirit of religious words and practice, difference has to be overcome and negated. We need to dissolve

consciousness of each other, concentrating on the One. In 'Crossing Boundaries', Jonathan consistently includes religious references with the spiritual and so I felt I could enter into the spirit of the 'Oneness' and 'Morning' celebrations, the sharing of the light and anointing.

I think a location for the Annual Gathering could be found which is accessible for more members. Suggestions for future themes/topics might be invited from all members rather than only those present.

Eilean Lavelle

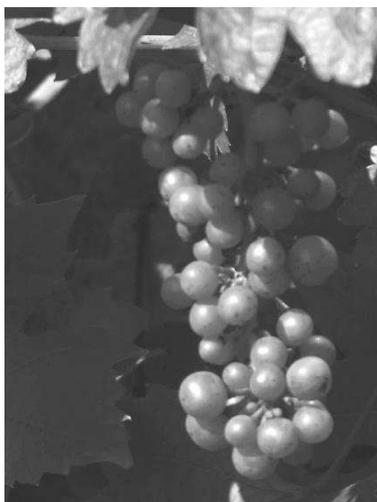
To the Editor:

Llantarnam Abbey is a lovely place to visit, but having attended for five years running, I now feel that there needs to be some change of format and content if the place, and the Annual Gathering, are to call me back next year, primarily a clear focus on spiritual experiences rather than religious forms. Accounts of spiritual experience might provide us with something to get our teeth into. I could easily find such texts from Buddhism, from Jung's work, and from the modern 'dreaming community'. I am sure others could find similar appropriate texts from the traditions that appeal to them. Subsequent discussion might allow, if they so wish, people to recall their own experiences by way of comparison or contrast.

Could we invite someone from the RERC to summarise what they have discovered about religious experiences over the years they have been operating? What do academics now see as the key issues around this subject? How are they addressing them? Have they come to any conclusions? In what direction is their research headed? How might members of the Society help? This might be particularly pertinent given what I understood by Andy's comments about the reorganisation of the Trust under direction from the Charity Commission?

Alan Underwood

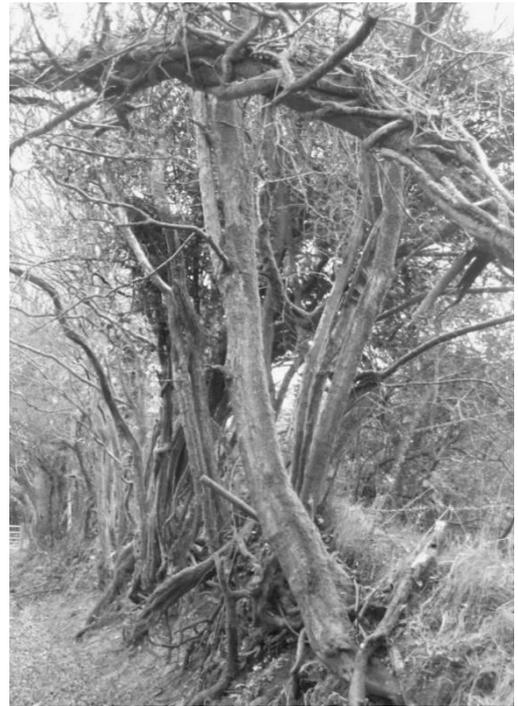
See also Eilean's and Alan's contributions to the Llantarnam report, pages 24-25 (Ed.)



Lost

Stand still.
The trees ahead and the bushes beside you are not lost.
Wherever you are is called here.
And you must treat it as you would a powerful stranger.
Must ask permission to know it and be known.
Listen! The forest breathes.
It whispers 'I have made this place. If you leave it
You may come back saying;
Here No two trees are the same to raven
No two bushes are the same to wren.
If what a tree or a branch does is lost on you
Then you are surely lost.
Stand still: the forest knows where you are.
You must let it find you.

David Wagoner



Our Hands

"I know it like the back of my hand,"
is the boastful phrase we sometimes hear.
But do we ever really study our hands?
Palmists profess to read our character,
or even our destiny, in the palm's deep lines,
but true or false, the interest is on the back.

If we wrinkle the skin, we find all Nature there:
its streams and rivers; waves lapping the shore;
branches of trees, and the runes we see in their trunks;
high mountains and valleys; seas with cliffs and hills;
the basic shapes which fashion our world's beauty,
all there for us to see in miniature.

If we look beyond, we recognize these shapes
repeated on every scale, now known as "Fractals".
But more than that, they give us flashes of insight
into the mind of our Heavenly Creator.
For Him, Size doesn't exist at all.

Susan Glyn



To Seed

Now into the last months
Our sun is fading -
a fragile comfort in the cold
The wind's more urgent, bringing something ...

After summer's sparkle and the orange-red fruit-fest
old skin shrivels
mottled fruit falls,
flesh hollowed out
Leaves drip to mud

The only green is evergreen

A blackbird's beak shows yellow in the mist.
Crows croak
old bones ache
What was loose and liquid sets and slows
Nothing comes easy now
But we can still hear birdsong in the wet fields

So we light the fire,
knowing
the seasons' turn

Jean Matthews



BOOK REVIEWS

**Robert D. Richardson, *William James: In the maelstrom of American Modernism*
New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006. 640 pp. ISBN 978 0 618 43325 4**

The author of this detailed biography of James' life has already written biographies of two other American literary giants – Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Although the overall size of this biography may appear somewhat intimidating, it is presented in ninety short chapters of just a few pages each, and describes very well William's multi-faceted but emotionally insecure personality. He was given to frequent bouts of melancholy and depression. As with C. G. Jung, his interest in psychology was probably motivated in part by an attempt to understand and explain his own rather depressed personality. Richardson describes in some detail the physical or mental ailments to which James was prone throughout his life.

William James was one of the creators of the philosophy of pragmatism: he wrote a book on the topic published in 1907. He was following in the footsteps of John Dewey and Charles Peirce when he said: 'The pragmatic method ... is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences.' As Richardson points out in his chapter on this topic, James uses this method to distinguish between the rationalist and the empiricist on the basis of how their respective attitudes in life define their personalities. In response to James' reading of an article on mind by Herbert Spencer, Richardson cites James as saying that 'rationality is itself a feeling or emotion ... not a matter of logic or math ... not induction, deduction or syllogism, not something higher than and detached from the senses ...'

There is a trenchant paragraph in Richardson on the respective views of the idea of pragmatism by Peirce and James. He writes: 'Peirce was what philosophers call a realist, someone who believes that general concepts have an existence independent of individual cases. Realists stood in opposition to nominalists – James was a nominalist – who believe that concepts have no real existence at all, being only verbal generalizations of individual cases.'

Richardson also discusses James' grappling with the ideas of modern physics – which is highly relevant to his interest in spiritualism, though this connection had not been proposed at that time. Commenting on James' views of modern physics Richardson quotes James as writing 'matter and the medium, or the visible and the invisible, are considered materially and dynamically continuous'. James was already having doubts about a truly materialistic interpretation of the world. This is interesting because James died a decade and more before quantum physics developed in the 1920s.

It was at this point that James proposed to his superiors that he should institute a course in psychology, as quite distinct from physiology. Parts II and III of Richardson's book are then given over to an account of James' psychological ideas. In the 1880s, Hegelian philosophy was in vogue in Cambridge. Although this was anathema to James, he did concede that Hegel's philosophy 'will probably have an important influence on the development of our liberal form of Christianity'. The New Christianity of clerics such as Bishops John Robinson and John Shelby Spong and other clerics like Anthony Freeman, owes much to Hegel's concept of *Geist*. This resonates in a spiritual context with much of what James was later to describe in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as mystical experience. It is in these chapters that we meet for the first time William's encounter with the medium Leonora Piper. He visited Mrs Piper after the death of his son Hermann the previous year and his several visits led him to believe that Mrs Piper had 'supernormal powers'. Interestingly, Richardson himself is not a supporter. He says that 'Serious interest in spiritualism ... and in mediums is harder to maintain now than it was a hundred years ago. The odds against spirit communication and thought transference have lengthened.' Clearly, the author is not up-to-date in his reading on the subject! As Richardson is clearly so dismissive of psychic phenomena, he makes no attempt to provide an explanation of Mrs Piper's powers, if James ever gave one. He says: '[Mrs Piper] might not convince us today; she certainly convinced William James'. Though he was highly impressed with Mrs Piper's abilities – so rare in fact that he called her 'White Crow' – as a scientist and philosopher James found these seemingly irrational abilities puzzling.

Part IV of Richardson's book is given over to this work and an exploration of William's own philosophy and religious beliefs. In the early 19th century he was contemplating giving up teaching to focus on philosophical reflection. He admired Henri Bergson's notion of the importance of time as duration and his rejection of concepts that 'imprison the whole of reality in a network prepared in advance'. What was needed said Bergson was 'metaphysical intuition or *Einfühlung* [empathy, sensitivity, understanding,]', which reflected James' interest

in mysticism. James admired what he saw as an empirical overhaul by Dewey and his associates of Kant's theory of knowledge and judgement that put the emphasis back on personal experience.

This book gives a detailed insight into the physical and psychological aspects of the life of William James. It indicates that James was a deep thinker over a wide range of related subjects and, in the process, envisioned key concepts that we embrace today. There is perhaps too much detail in the book on family trivia for those simply seeking information about his life, but this is a valuable sourcebook for scholars or those who want to get to know the man, William James, as well as his work. There is little here however about the important work he did in the field of spirituality. There are a few pages of illustrations in the book, with several pages of notes and an index at the end.

Reviewed by Howard Jones

See Howard Jones' article on William James, page 14

Richard Maurice Bucke (ed.), *Cosmic Consciousness: A study in the evolution of the human mind*

**Philadelphia, Innes and Sons, 1905. (1st edition 1901. republished 2007, 2010). 342 pp.
ISBN 1 60424 125 X**

Richard Bucke was a prominent 19th century Canadian psychiatrist who was born in 1837 and died in 1902. He was therefore a near contemporary of William James (1842-1910). He wrote three books: *Man's Moral Nature* and a biography, *Walt Whitman*, as well as this one and, as would be expected of an eminent academic, a number of technical papers in his field of study. The book is a collection of the writings, with commentary by Bucke, of several dozen people who have had something to say about human consciousness and spiritual awareness. Bucke describes cosmic consciousness as 'a higher form of consciousness than that possessed by the ordinary man. This last is called Self Consciousness and is that faculty upon which rests all of our life ...'

Bucke distinguishes three 'forms or grades of consciousness' – simple consciousness (that of the animal kingdom), self-consciousness (of humans) and cosmic consciousness (an awareness of the order of the universe). He maintains 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 Teilhard de Chardin who saw the world evolving through the geosphere (the material of the physical Earth), biosphere (the evolution of living creatures), psychosphere (the emergence of thinking creatures) and noosphere (the evolution of Man to a state of spiritual awareness and living immersion of the soul). The concept is also similar to the more secular ideas of Jung's collective unconscious and Sheldrake's morphic field.

Bucke foresees economic and social revolutions which will continue those of the last few centuries but, most importantly, the psychical revolution that will change the whole outlook of humankind. In this state, there will be no need for religion as we know it today, for spirituality will fill every moment of our lives and each soul will 'feel and know itself to be immortal': the Saviour of Man is 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.' Bucke (and de Chardin) regard it as part of the natural process of (biological or sociological) evolution.

The list of contributors is very varied – from Gautama the Buddha and Jesus through Dante, Muhammad, Roger Bacon, Francis Bacon, Pascal, Swedenborg, Tennyson, Wordsworth and Pushkin, to Walt Whitman and Ramakrishna; and there are many more. Many of the 'contributors' whose thoughts Bucke presents are, rather irritatingly, identified only by initials. The term 'evolution' is used in the sense of 'development' – there is comparatively little here on evolution in the sense in which it is used by biologists. Such evolution as is described here is predominantly cultural rather than strictly biological; artistic creativity and spiritual insight derive from this cosmic consciousness.

For a book written over a century ago we cannot be surprised if the style of English shows its age; but the writing is poetic and inspirational. As the book contains a collection of writings of very much greater antiquity, often of poets, we cannot really have a problem with this. I would recommend this book for anyone who is, or who wishes to be, in tune with cosmic spirit. It is a more reflective treatment of the subject than many books written today and contains words of wisdom from many who, in this respect, are sages.

Reviewed by Howard Jones

Keith Ward, *The Evidence for God, The Case for the Existence of the Spiritual Dimension* London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 2014. 149pp. ISBN 978 0 232 53130 5 (pbk). £9.99.

In today's scientific age, when we sometimes seem to assume that we have, or soon will have, clear answers to the mysteries of life and that science will solve all our problems, we have begun to demand clear evidence for any kind of belief. This is especially true of belief in God.

In this book Keith Ward makes the case for the existence of the spiritual dimension. He moves from the common (mis)conception of God as a kind of extraterrestrial being interfering in worldly affairs from time to time, to a subtle understanding of Spirit as 'one reality of supreme value which is the source of all the values we can experience'. This is done by considering the values manifest in the arts, morality, philosophy, science, religion and personal experience.

Artistic creativity and appreciation, whether in the plastic arts, music, drama or the written word can give a sense of transcendence by offering a deeper view of life. Our moral sense may be understood as coming from beyond material reality, as an innate understanding of what is the right or wrong way to live. This is entirely compatible with the existence of a higher dimension. Philosophy offers ways of interpreting our experience of the world. The view of the universe as ultimately grounded in the mind of God makes more sense than seeing the universe as closed, with God considered as some kind of added extra, tinkering with events, as is so often assumed by those wishing to dispense with any kind of ultimate reality.

Science itself seems to indicate an emergent universe, evolving from inherent qualities into ever more complex and conscious realities, seemingly purposefully. This is more compatible with the existence of God or a cosmic mind or Spirit, than the view that it is all merely an

accident. The view held by Stephen Hawking, that 'we human beings ... are ourselves mere collections of fundamental particles' is challenged by Ward for its omission of consciousness, mind, purpose and value, 'Because thoughts and feelings are just not physical.' As to the origins of the universe, various theories have been put forward, including multiple universes, of which ours is just one, producing conscious beings. But for a theist like Ward, 'the deepest reality is mind, eternal and necessary mind.'

Ward maintains that religion remains a powerful force worldwide, despite the materialist assumption that such immature ideas would die out as civilisation progressed. The wisdom of the great teachers and founders of religious traditions continues to be inspirational to millions, offering different ways of approaching Spirit and enhancing the value of human life.

Yet reasoning can only get us so far. Ultimately it is our own experience which leads to an awareness of a transcendent reality of goodness, of a power beyond the everyday. The many different accounts from people across the ages offer evidence which, while not enough to convince a profound sceptic, will suffice for an open-minded searcher. Aligning oneself with what is good and seeking wisdom are ways of discovering this spiritual dimension, which often seems hidden. Our eyes need to be opened to this ultimate reality. It often takes an experience of alienation, perhaps the Buddhist awareness of the need to transcend greed, hatred and ignorance or the 'Dark Night of the Soul' of John of the Cross before we can move to a deeper spiritual understanding.

Evidence cannot be restricted to publicly observable events, but will necessarily involve mental events and experiences, which need to be interpreted and evaluated in order to make sense of them. Towards the end of the book, Keith Ward sets out his criteria for making reasonable decisions with regard to the non-physical aspects of life and stresses that as free agents, humans will always be able to choose what to believe and how to live. For him, living with a belief in a spiritual reality of goodness, truth and beauty enhances life and enables us to face death.

It is always a pleasure to review a new book by an author as familiar to AHSSSE members as Keith Ward, from whom we have come to expect clarity and erudition enlivened by humour. His latest offering does not disappoint.

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin

Richard Bohannon, *Religions and Environments: a Reader in Religion, Nature and Ecology* London, Bloomsbury, 2014. (xii) 368 pp. ISBN 978 1 78093 802 8 (pbk) £24.99

Part One. The Wilderness: Nature as wild and remote

This anthology edited by Richard Bohannon is a broad sweep encompassing both historical and contemporary writing on religion and the environment. The book's main body is thoughtfully divided into three parts; The Wilderness, The Garden, and The City in an attempt to centralize the themes around which the essays revolve. In keeping with the environmental exigency of the current era Bohannon introduces his book with a short reminder of the litany of environmental ills that befall us presently. Thankfully these points are not laboured extensively and he balances this initial prose with examples of problems that have been addressed successfully.

Bohannon points out that in Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, addressed to every person living on the planet, it is recognised that we face global environmental deterioration: Pope Francis writes that he hopes the Encyclical Letter will help us acknowledge the appeal, and the immensity and urgency of the challenge we face. Bohannon admits his aims, in *Religions and Environments*, are to introduce readers not just to the diversity of religious responses to nature, but also to the diversity of environments to which people are responding. He also introduces us to 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', an influential essay by Lynn White which previously appeared in the periodical *Science*. White argues that the current environmental crisis is at its root a religious crisis, and that what people do about their ecological issues depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. She maintains that the Christian narrative of mastery over nature is to blame for the modern environmental crisis and the inordinately exploitative technologies that have engendered it.



Part One is subdivided into two sections: 'Encountering the Wild' and 'Wilderness and Religious Traditions'. There are twelve essays by diverse authors in this part, and whilst several examples of classic American nature writing are reflected upon – Henry David Thoreau's 'Walking' for instance – several major religious spiritual traditions from around the world

are included. In my view the essay 'Wilderness as a Sabbath for the Land' by Scott Russell Sanders is the most enlightening. Sanders writes '... For the wilderness represents in space what the Sabbath represents in time – a limit to our dominion, a refuge from the quest for power and wealth, an acknowledgement that Earth does not belong to us.' Indeed to put the Earth into a Biblical and social context, Sanders quotes Exodus 23:10-12

Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and donkey may have relief, and your home born slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.

In this essay Sanders reminds us, also quoting Leviticus and Psalms, that the Sabbath links an obligation to care for the poor with an obligation to care for the land, and all the creatures that depend on the land for shelter and food. Perhaps in a modern day context this thought can be portrayed as not contaminating the air on a Sabbath day with unnecessary CO₂ and tyre particulates, (thus also reducing the demand for the Sabbath day manning of retail outlets). For many Westerners, even those who attend their respective places of worship, the Sabbath has recently lost much of its meaning. Instead of being for reflection and renewal, the Sabbath has becoming a time for shopping, watching television and forgetting. Revealingly, the first word of the Sabbath commandment is *remember*. Remember to relieve from toil all those who depend on you in order to rest.

Sanders reminds us that the Sabbath is one seventh part of our days, yet far less than one seventh of the land (in the USA) remains in wilderness. He draws upon an analogy with the Sabbath by answering those who would question the 'locking up' of resources vital to prosperity with the question 'why spend time worshipping, why meditate or pray?' and states that if it is really true that economies will fail unless we devote every minute and every acre to the pursuit of profit, then economies are already doomed. For where shall we turn after the calendar and continents have been exhausted?

Equally compelling, but in a completely different context from that of Sanders and the Sabbaths, is the last essay in this section: 'Good, Wild, Sacred'. This contribution, originally written in 1990, is by Gary Snyder, a poet and essayist associated with the Beat Poet generation, whose ideas were heavily influenced by both Native people's spiritualities and by Zen Buddhism. Snyder recounts a trip he took by truck near Alice Springs, Australia, with an aboriginal *Pintubi* elder named Jimmy. Delightfully Snyder tells the reader that as they travelled by speed near all the *Pintubi* sacred sites Jimmy would tell of the lore associated with the places but could never seem to finish the story before the next holy place came around the corner. Snyder writes 'I couldn't keep up. I realized after about half an hour of this that these were tales to be told while walking, and that I was experiencing a speeded up version of what might be leisurely told over several days of foot travel.

This to me illustrates perfectly the relevance of Sabbath as time out, so to speak, in another context. To deeply appreciate the significance of a geographical artefact, or holy place it must surely be worth the while to suspend or slow down the distance travelled through time as one approaches the destination. Why rush what should be savoured? Sacredness in the Australian Aboriginal meaning implies a sense of optimal habitat for certain animals that they associate their tribes with. For instance a 'Dreaming' place as Aboriginals would have it for, say Green Parrots, would be a part of the landscape truly perfect for parrots. Thus, as Snyder relates, 'The land itself was their chapel and their shrines were hills and creeks and their religious relics were animals, plants and birds. Thus the migrations of aboriginals, though spurred by economic need, were also always pilgrimages.'

In Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* it is written

Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures. The biblical texts are to be read in their context, with an appropriate hermeneutic, recognizing that they tell us to 'till and keep' the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). 'Tilling' refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while 'keeping' means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature. Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. 'The earth is the Lord's' (Ps 24:1); to him belongs 'the earth with all that is within it' (Dt 10:14). Thus God rejects every claim to absolute ownership: 'The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with me' (Lev 25:23).

I feel this extract from the Pope's recent encyclical perfectly sums up the thread of concordance that we can take from the two essays I have chosen to represent Part 1 of *Religions and Environments*.

Other authors in Part I explore the place of wilderness conservation, and the national park movement particularly in the USA; there are philosophical debates on subjects such as death, and ritual across a wide range of spiritual traditions. This is of course all in the context of 'the wilderness' and the question emerges: how can the human family be seen as part of the world's fauna, rather than the masters of all?

Reviewed by Daniel 'Woodsman' Craver

Parts II and III of the book, The Garden and The City, will be reviewed by Daniel in the Spring and Autumn issues next year. Ed.

Gary Holz, with Robbie Holz, *Secrets of Aboriginal Healing: a physicist's journey with a remote Australian tribe*
Rochester, Vermont, Bear & Co., 2013. 116 pp. ISBN 978 1 59143175 6

This is a remarkable story told by a couple who have experienced the most severe health traumas and survived. The tale is primarily about Dr Gary Holz, physicist and psycho-neuro-immunologist, who had recourse to traditional tribal remedies from the aborigines of Australia to recover from multiple sclerosis – an affliction regarded by western medicine as incurable and progressively degenerative. He subsequently recovered sufficiently to become a healer himself, and his wife, who survived an infection from hepatitis C, continued her husband's healing work after his death.

Gary was diagnosed in 1983 and went to Australia in 1994 having had the usual death sentence pronounced on him by doctors. At age 43, he was given just two years to live. And so, through a chance meeting with a naturopath who knew aboriginal healers in Queensland near Brisbane, he decided he had nothing to lose by letting these healers experiment with his body. The healers identified in the book as Rose and Ray spoke perfect English.* Their diagnosis of the cause of Gary's illness was that it arose through his 'beliefs and feelings' – that through pressure of work he had not allowed himself to express his emotions. By suffocating his emotional feelings, he lost the ability to feel things physically.

This sounds very close to the sort of diagnosis one would expect from psychologists like Herbert Benson or motivational speakers like Louise Hay and Wayne Dyer. In the past decade there have been several books that have told us of the power of intention. Gary was about to experience this first-hand. The first shock to Gary beginning his treatment was the remoteness of the location and the frugality of the amenities. He had to contend with eating crocodile and witchetty grubs, temperatures of 100 degrees, and a lifestyle very far from the luxury that he had been used to. He had to sleep on a bed of bare slats in a hut with no doors or windows. And everywhere, the monotony of the parched, penetrating red earth broken only by the few peeling, white-barked eucalyptus trees.

He was surprised by the relative quiet in the village; this was because the natives usually communicated telepathically, and soon Gary would be able to see their auras. He also learned at the outset one of the cornerstones of aboriginal medicine: 'a person's mind exists in every part of his body, in every single cell. Because of this, every thought we have, every emotion we experience, has a physical effect on the body.' As well as this rather simple explanation, Gary's healer, Rose, was able to talk to him in the sort of technical language that he would understand.

So, as he talked with Rose, the details of the emotional traumas of Gary's life emerged and he hardly needed Rose to point out that they were causative factors in his illness. He tells the story of his wellness mission from the beginning as well as laying bare all the traumas of his life up to that point. He recounted the 'chance' meeting with Carolyn, a Doctor of Naturopathy, in a jazz club. As the story unfolds, it reads like a novel but I have no doubt it describes a real experience. There are separate short chapters on each of the Five Essentials of Healing: Willingness, Awareness, Acceptance, Empowerment, and Focus. By working through these stages of his treatment Gary came to see that there is a pattern in even the greatest misfortune. Often in life, circumstances take us down a path that, at the time, we do not want to take, only for some beneficial outcome to eventually emerge.

As with many Amerindian and Inuit communities, the aborigines have a much closer relationship with their god than do many of those in western society who go through the rituals prescribed by their religion. This relationship is illustrated by Rose, who spent day after day devoted entirely to healing Gary, doing nothing for herself but deriving satisfaction from service to someone else. For the remaining 13 years of his life Gary was able to walk again, clumsily, and helped to heal others. Gary's wife Robbie also became empowered with healing energy through aboriginal healing and was able to share with others the spiritual wisdom they had learned in the remote outback of Australia. What an inspirational story!

Reviewed by Howard Jones

* I don't have any reservations about the truth of indigenous people being able to speak fluent English – many have been educated in English-speaking schools and universities. I have met with Australian aborigines and Canadian Inuit who were equally fluent.

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Wayne Dyer, *The Power of Intention*, Hay House, CA, 2004.

Louise Hay, *You Can Heal Your Life*, Hay House, Santa Monica, CA, 1984.

Diana Espirito Sant & Nico Tassi (eds.), *Making Spirits: Materiality and Transcendence in Contemporary Religions*.

London: I. B. Tauris, 2013. ix 260 pp. ISBN 978 1 84885 796 4 £59.50.

This edited volume belongs to a new area of research within the anthropology of religion: material culture. At first glance it might seem strange that a book about spirits focuses on materiality. However, as the editors in the introduction argue, the material dimension is not only a means of expression but goes much further. The process of materially producing a spirit, hence an immaterial entity, is crucial for the understanding of some religions. Objects take a central position in worship and have to be studied within their ethnographic context, as this volume perfectly presents.

The idea for this book derived from a panel discussion held at the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA) annual conference in Bristol in 2009. Most of the authors involved in the book are therefore anthropologists working in different research areas. The richness of the ethnographic case studies makes this book an interesting volume, useful for both students and researchers. Probably due to the research interest of the editors, the majority of case studies are from Latin America, focusing, perhaps not surprisingly, on Afro-American traditions.

Diana Espirito Santo refers to her research area, Cuban spiritism, when she discusses materiality in the Afro-Creole religious sphere of Havana. Her chapter illustrates how representing the spirits is part of acknowledging and living with the spirit world. Three other chapters each highlight a different Brazilian religion: Roger Sansi explains how spirits are made in Brazilian Candomblé, while Arnaud Halloy discusses the significance of objects in Xangô in Recife, another Afro-Brazilian religion. Andrew Dawson focuses on the making of Daime, the psychoactive beverage that is at the centre of Santo Daime, a new Brazilian religion which also contains some elements from Afro-Brazilian traditions. Two further

chapters focus on local forms of popular Catholicism: Susanna Rosta writes about Mexican Concheros, famously known for their dances, and how they create their religiosity with flowers, candles and other objects. Nico Tassi explains the material dimension of the religiosity of the Bolivian highlanders and their 'exchange with God'.

The remaining three chapters each present a case study from a different area of the world. Ludovic Coupaye writes about objects among the Abelam in Papua New Guinea; Philip Swift explains the role of jam jars in a Japanese new religion called Mahikari; Joe Trapido, who draws his example from Kinshasa, Congo and in particular the BaKongo people, discusses the question of fetishism. Comparing historical sources that reflect the colonial attitude towards religious objects with contemporary material from Congolese Pentecostalism, he argues that the Pentecostal approach to materiality has led to the popularity of Pentecostalism in this region.

Each chapter presents a compelling approach to materiality in the 'making of spirits'. The authors present a convincing argument that spirits have a material dimension which we need to understand if we want to grasp the meaning of transcendence for the practitioners. It is a highly specialised volume that might not attract many readers from outside anthropology as its core is concerned with objects and not spirits. Nonetheless, it is a very good book within the anthropology of religion, opening the path for further studies about the making of the immaterial.

Reviewed by Bettina E. Schmidt

Andrew Dawson, *Santo Daime: a New World Religion*

London, Bloomsbury, 2013. viii 226 pp. ISBN 978 1 1441 1542 8 (pbk) £16.99

Andrew Dawson's book is based on field and academic research he carried out from 2007 to 2011 within the communities and centers where this faith tradition is practised. Primarily aimed at undergraduate students and researchers working in Religious Studies, Sociology of Religion, Anthropology, Cultural Studies and Latin American Studies, this work is important as there are very few academic or anthropological texts widely available in English on this subject. After a brief treatment of the historical background, chapter 1 deals principally with the contemporary practice of the religion. Chapter 2 deals with its ritual repertoire, while chapter 3 looks at discourse amongst its practitioners who are known as *daimistas*, the majority of whom now come from the Brazilian urban middle class. Chapter 4 gives a detailed analysis of these practices while avoiding the controversy which their introduction has caused among traditional practitioners. Chapter 5 deals with the *daimistas* in their social context and explores how they have modified and shaped the original practice, specifically their adoption of mediumship and spirit possession.

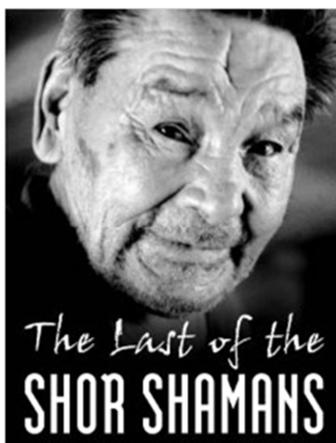
Santo Daime was born of the religious experience of one man: Raimundo Irineu Serra. An Afro-Brazilian of slave descent from the north-east of Brazil, his adventurous spirit led him as a young man to seek a new life in the Amazonian forests of Acre in north-western Brazil, where he found work as an itinerant rubber tapper. He soon met with a drink known to locals as *óaska* which was used by the indigenous tribes for its curative and spiritual properties. On the third instance of his taking this drink he had a profound experience which was to shape

the rest of his life and that of many others. He entered into a spiritual dimension where he came into contact with a beautiful woman seated on a throne within the light of the Moon. She instructed him to undertake a strict 7 day diet while drinking *óaska* and continuing with his work in the rubber groves. This he did and he began to perceive the spirits of the forest and sense the trees reaching out to embrace him. On the 8th day he was approached again by the female divinity who presented herself to him as 'Our Lady of Conception' and offered him a mission: to replant the Christian doctrine on Earth. The young Irineu Serra accepted, asking that the cure for all the ills of the world be placed within the drink through which he had received the mission. This was conceded to him and he was gifted with a hymn through which to remember the event.

Forward 18 years and, on the 26th May 1930 in a simple adobe hut he had built amongst a nascent community of economic outcasts on the fringes of Acre's main town, Rio Branco, Irineu Serra held the very first session of what would later be called 'Santo Daime'. Attended by just three others, the session involved the drinking of *óaska* followed by a silent meditation seated around a table on which was placed a cross, symbolizing the Christian doctrine. Over the next 40 years this mission would expand both in numbers of followers and in ritual composition. Hymns began to be 'received' from the spiritual dimension known as the '*astral*' to augment the inspiration first received by Irineu Serra, and he baptized *óaska* with the new name *daime* (Portuguese for 'give me'), a name which refers to the petitioning of the divine for all the drinker's needs. He carried out many cures amongst those who sought help where allopathic treatment had failed, and became renowned as a figure of decency, trust and humility.

Following his death in 1971, the centre founded by Raimundo Irineu Serra, CICLU (Christian Illumination Center Universal Light), experienced an internecine dispute which led to the desertion of 70% of its members under the leadership of a late-follower, Sebastião Mota de Melo. But it is through the centre set up by the latter, CEFLURIS (Eclectic Center of the Universal Flowing Light Raimundo Irineu Serra), that the Santo Daime mission would subsequently expand and internationalize.

Reviewed by Rod Sazio



Alexander & Luba Arbachakov, *The Last of the Shor Shamans* (translated from the Russian by Joanna Dobson)
Winchester, O Books, 2008. (x) 92 pp. ISBN 978 1 84694 127 6
(pbk) £9.99

The Shor Shamans are in the Altai Mountain region of Siberia believed by some scholars to be the place where religion, in the form of Shamanism, began. The authors are an indigenous husband and wife team, Luba a folklorist and Alexander a photographer. In their introduction they say that the subjects of the book, the last *kam(s)* – the shamans of *Gornaya Shoriya* – 'represent the true guardians of their people's traditions, customs and culture.' (p. 8)

I found myself seeking parallels with other cosmologies, but maybe this is linear thinking. However one striking parallel was the finding that serious illness often preceded the awakening of shamanic power (otherwise it was handed down in families). This reminded me of many accounts in the Alister Hardy RERC archive, and elsewhere, of serious illness preceding profound spiritual experience/spiritual awakening. With the Shor Shamans the person would have to accept the shamanic power to get better. The implication was that the alternative would be death. In our culture there would not be such a stark choice maybe, in denial of death as we are most of the time. However, there does seem to be a parallel in our culture with anecdotal evidence of serious illness resulting in spiritual epiphany.

Something I found moving and extremely significant was that often the shaman's sacred drum had been destroyed, but rituals retained drumming movements, and chants, that vividly evoked them. Shamanic practices had been suppressed, first by Orthodox Christian missionaries, then with great brutality by the communist regime. Shamans were killed, their homes (and of course their drums) destroyed. But the Spirit and thus the tradition survives.

Shamans would now take a broom, or even a tea towel, seemingly any domestic object to hand. That they used tea cloths and brooms instead of the traditional sacred ritual objects that have been destroyed affected me deeply; this does imply that the impulse to spirituality is so strong that all attempts at obliteration will fail.¹ This is what I found moving – a humble substitute for a ritual in the face of oppression and persecution somehow adds spiritual stature rather than detracting from it.

The little book contains pages of ritual (*kamlanie*) and religious poetry that retain a vivid authenticity, despite having been translated from the vernacular into Russian, then from Russian into English. Whatever has been lost in translation, as with the loss of shamanic tools – drums to tea towels – the power is not diminished, the Spirit lives on. This is the culture of the throat singers; I once heard some Mongolian throat singers in concert and I was transported to the plains – I *did* ride like the wind with my harness jingling, the pounding hooves finding a rhythm in my blood. The Shor poetry took me back to this experience ...

O-o, I will rise up, and slap the swinging reins
May the tip of my lash plunge
I will find mouth-tongue traditions
May the end of my lash wave and draw,
May the road I travel be open, o-o
May the tops of the grasses sway past, o-o
May the crowns of the trees bow down, o-o
May the end of the lash be untied
May the head of the game bones shine
I incline my moon ears, o-o (pp. 65-6)

This amazing imagery is evoked in a rudimentary kitchen with a tea towel ...

Again I find parallels with other cultures, this time through Welsh Bardic poetry and the tales of the *Mabinogion*, (although these would have had the advantage of being declaimed, usually in poetic competition, in the royal court of the Bard's patron). But in both cases the hypnotic repetition and vivid imagery of nature in this world can lead to real experience in other worlds, or dimensions:

I was a spark in fire
I was wood in a bonfire
I sang in the army of the trees' branches
Before the ruler of Britain ...

In the contest, everything is revealed
When dew is distilled
When bees yield up their store
And incense is offered
And the golden pipes of Lleu
And the silver boat is fitted
And the ruby gems of berries
And the foam of the ocean
And the beholding of wonders
With the stars about the moon
And the bright appearance of men
Against the winds of the airs
(*Taliesin: Shamanism and the Bardic Mysteries in Britain and Ireland*, John Matthews, Aquarian Press 1991)

However, 'The Shaman's most important function is to heal the sick' (p. 44). The *Shortsi* believe illness happens when the soul leaves the body and loses its way. Then the Shaman, who travels between the worlds, must bring it back.

In death, perhaps the most interesting aspect of Shor Shamanism for Alister Hardy *aficionados*, the *kam* would liaise with the spirit of the departed, and other spirits in the beyond, in a series of rituals at the funeral and after at specified times. The book contains pages of ritual poetry for this journey of the soul.

There are explanatory notes which illuminate the poetry by giving the complex meanings of many of the lines,² also a glossary and references. At the end one is left with a sense of gratitude to the Arbachakovs, who have preserved what are only the remnants of a culture which goes back thousands of years, where scholars such as Geoffrey Ashe³ believe religion was born.

Reviewed by Patricia Murphy

1. The upsurge of religious observance after *Glasnost* in Russia, and the research findings by Professors Badham and Yeo in China are illustrative of this.
2. Moon ears and shining game bones for instance – you will have to get the book ...
3. Geoffrey Ashe, *The Dawn before the Dawn*, Henry Holt and Company, 1992

**Maggie la Tourelle, *The Gift of Alzheimer's*
London, Maggie La Tourelle, 2014, xiv 276pp. ISBN 978 0 9575552 0 4 (pbk)**

This intriguing book is part journal, part love letter and part advice for anyone caring for a loved one with dementia. Based on the journal she kept while caring for her mother (Pat), the author shares insights that she and her mother uncovered in the last four years of Pat's life. Maggie la Tourelle movingly shares some of the complex lives of her mother, her sister and father (all now deceased), and describes how she and Pat eventually reached a place of peace

together. The insights gained represent the *Gift* of the title: the author states that Alzheimer's causes her mother to live only in the present and to lose her ego, which she defines as a transcendental state.

Diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2000, Pat was moved into a care home next door to the family home in 2002. The book picks up the story from 2003, and presents edited conversations between Maggie and her mother, with commentary by Maggie. Here is an example (bold text indicates a phrase that Pat expressed with emphasis):

Mum: *I see tears.*

I don't have any now but later my tears come.

Mum: *Don't cry.* (She looks perplexed.) ***We are learning we're immortal,*** *Margaret.*
I will be around. I'll flutter around you. (p.45)

In addition to showing the behaviour we know so well of dementia – forgetfulness, confusion, mood swings – Pat reports her progress on an emotional and spiritual journey as she gradually lets go of her life here, supported all the while by Maggie. Pat describes seven stages that she goes through as she prepares for the next life. Rather than contradicting or dismissing any unusual thing her mother says, Maggie allows Pat to speak her mind, praises her wisdom and pays her compliments. The conclusion Maggie draws, prompted by her mother's statements and questions, is that Pat is existing in two worlds at once (exemplified by Pat's statements such as 'We are all living in other worlds' and 'It's difficult being ... working between two worlds').

The idea of living simultaneously in the material world and the spiritual world, in the liminal space between life and death, is a recurring theme in spiritual accounts, but there are few accounts of such experiences from a person living with dementia. It is the quality of listening that Maggie employs that makes the difference here: by listening attentively and encouraging her mother to talk about what she is feeling and experiencing, a much fuller account of what is going on for Pat, both emotionally and spiritually, is elicited. This is an important message for anyone who is caring for a person living with dementia: the author maintains that if we listen carefully with loving attention, we may also be rewarded with love and insight in return.

Maggie la Tourelle is well acquainted with spiritual matters (some readers may know of her book on Kinesiology), and she explores spiritual topics throughout the book. An index of terms at the end provides definitions of terms such as *past-life regression* and *clairvoyance*. I warmly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in spirituality at the end of life and in the possibility of healing deep family trauma whilst still on this plane of existence.

Reviewed by Rhonda Riachi

This is an extended version of a review first published in Reaching Out, the magazine of the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies.

There is an article on this subject by Maggie La Tourelle in the July/August 2015 issue of Kindred Spirit www.kindredspirit.co.uk (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 **Marian MacPolin** – mmacpolin@yahoo.co.uk who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you. When we receive your review, the book will become yours. If you would like to review a book that is not on this list, please contact the Editor – theotokos66@gmail.com

- | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Bullivant, Steven | <i>The Trinity: how not to be a heretic</i> | (Paulist Press, 2015) |
| Dear, John | <i>Thomas Merton, Peacemaker: Meditations on Merton, Peacemaking and the Spiritual Life</i> | (Orbis, 2015) |
| Laurentin, René | <i>Mary in Scripture, Liturgy, and the Catholic Tradition</i> | (Paulist Press, 2015) |
| Saracino, Michele | <i>Christian Anthropology: an Introduction to the Human Person</i> | (Paulist Press, 2015) |
| Baker, David W (ed.) | <i>Biblical Faith and Other Religions: an Evangelical Assessment</i> | (Kregel, 2014) |
| Blakely, Colin | <i>Christian Thinkers: a Beginner's Guide to over Seventy Leading Theologians through the Ages</i> | (Hendrickson, 2014) |
| Haight, Roger | <i>Spirituality Seeking Theology</i> | (Orbis, 2014) |
| Horan, Daniel P, OFM | <i>The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton: a New Look at the Spiritual Inspiration of his Life, Thought, and Writing</i> | (Ave Maria Press, 2014) |
| Keathley, Kenneth D
& Rooker, Mark F. | <i>40 Questions about Creation and Evolution</i> | (Kregel, 2014) |
| Lassale-Klein, Robert | <i>Blood and Ink: Ignacio Ellacuría, Jon Sobrino, and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America</i> | (Orbis, 2014) |
| Min, Anselm K (ed) | <i>The Task of Theology: Leading Theologians on the Most Compelling Questions for Today</i> | (Orbis, 2014) |
| Perry, T A | <i>Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible: Exploring God's Twilight Zone</i> | (Hendrickson, 2014) |
| Stewart, Pamela J &
Strathern, Andrew | <i>Ritual: Key Concepts in Religion</i> | (Bloomsbury, 2014) |
| Storbakken, Jason | <i>Radical Spirituality: Repentance, Resistance, Revolution</i> | (Orbis, 2014) |
| Crockett, Kent | <i>Slaying Your Giants: Biblical Solutions to Everyday Problems</i> | (Hendrickson, 2013) |
| Habito, Ruben L F | <i>Zen and the Spiritual Exercises: Paths of Awakening and Transformation</i> | (Orbis, 2013) |
| Mandair,
Arvind-Pal Singh | <i>Sikhism: a Guide for the Perplexed</i> | (Bloomsbury, 2013) |
| Tanous, Alex, D.D.
with Cooper, Callum E. | <i>Conversations with Ghosts</i> | (White Crow, 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)
Stewart, Robert B (ed.)	<i>Can Only One Religion be True: Paul Knitter & Harold Netland in Dialogue</i> (Fortress, 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)
Myers, Ched & Colwell, Matthews	<i>Our God is Undocumented: Biblical Faith and Immigrant Justice (US/Mexican border)</i> (Orbis, 2012)

Programme of AHSSSE Events, 2015-2016

Friday 10th September 2015

2.00 pm AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: *The Hunters' Moon* – Trudy Porter.
 Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.
 Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432 – maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Wednesday 10th September 2015

3.00 pm AHSSSE London Group: Programme review; and illustrated presentations:
Sir Alister Hardy's A Cotswold Sketchbook revisited by Andy Burns, and
Ethiopian Churches by Rowena Rudkin.
 Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8.
 Contact: John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com

Saturday 17th October 2015

AHSSSE Open Day 2015

10.00 am Registration
 10.30 am Welcome and Introductions
 10.45 am AHSSSE AGM (all welcome, but only members may vote)
 12.00 pm Lunch (bring packed lunch; tea/coffee provided)
 1.00 pm 2014 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture, by Professor Bettina Schmidt:
Sensing is Believing? Spirit Possession and Other Forms of Religious Experience in Brazil
 2.30 pm Short break
 2.45 pm Dr Penny Sartori: *The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences*
 3.45 pm Short break
 4.00 pm Wine Reception in Celebration of 30 year Anniversary of the Award of the Templeton Prize to Sir Alister Hardy and Retirement of John Franklin

Venue: The Friends Meeting House, St Giles, Oxford, OX1 1RD
 (Cost: £20; AHS members £16; students £5. Inquiries and bookings:
 Marianne Rankin 077140 32643; email: mariannerankin@icloud.com)

Thursday 19th November 2015

3.00 pm AHSSSE London Group: Talk: *Seeking the Sacred: World Faiths, Secularity and Religious Experience*, by Alan Race.
Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London, W8.
Contact: John Franklin, e-mail: johnfranklin35@hotmail.com

Wednesday 26th November 2015

2.0 pm AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: Discussion: *The Tao* – Val Evans.
Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.
Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432 – maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Thursday 24th March 2016

2.00 pm AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: Topic, *Extra-corporeal experiences: Reincarnation* – DVD & speaker
Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.
Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432 – maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Thursday (date to be decided) April 2016

2.00 am AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: Outing – *date and destination to be confirmed*
Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.
Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432 – maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Thursday 23rd June 2016

2.00 am AHSSSE South-East Wales Group: Topic, *Extra-corporeal experiences: Near Death Experiences* – DVD
Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.
Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432 – maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Thursday 22nd September 2016

2.00 pm AHSSSE South-East Wales Group:
Topic, *Extra-corporeal experiences: Reunions* – DVD
Venue: 12 Wood Close, Llanfrechfa, Cwmbran NP44 8UR.
Contact: Mary Cook, tel: 07794 294432 – maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Other Events

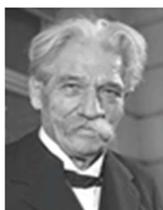
Friday 2nd October to Sunday 4th October 2015

Wrekin Trust: Round Table Gathering, *Being the Change* with Tim 'Mac' Macartney, Elaine Brook and Sean Dagan Wood. 4.00 pm
Inspired by their stories, the programme will be grounded in spiritual practice and give time for reflective discussion in workshops and small groups.
Venue: Hawkwood College, Stroud, Gloucestershire
Cost: Single £260, Shared £230, Non-residential £185. To book, call Hawkwood on 01453 759 034 or go online at <http://www.hawkwoodcollege.co.uk/all-courses-and-events/sustainability/being-thechange---mac-macartney>

Thursday 1st October 2015

- 7.00 pm Society for Psychical Research: Gwen Tate memorial Lecture,
The Inconsistencies in Survival Evidence by Dr. Zofia Weaver
Venue: Lecture Theatre, Kensington Central Library in Phillimore Walk, W8.
(Further details: Tel 020 7937 8984. www.spr.ac.uk)

Saturday 31st October 2015



- Scientific & Medical Network: *Dr Albert Schweitzer – a Celebration*.
Speakers: Dr James Carleton-Paget, Simon Dearsley (organist), David Lorimer,
Trish Sanderson.
A day to celebrate Dr Albert Schweitzer on the 50th anniversary of his death and
covering his life, philosophy and theology, medicine and organ music, with a
recital by Simon Dearsley.
Venue: St Mark's Church, Myddleton Square London EC1R 1XX.
(Tickets; £35. For further information e-mail: info@scimednet.org)

Friday 15th April to Sunday 17th April 2016

- 4.00 pm Scientific & Medical Network: Mystics & Scientists Conference 39:
Non-locality and the Oneness of Mind
Confirmed speakers: Dr Larry Dossey, Prof Tom McLeish FRS, Vera Helleman.
Venue: Horsley Park, East Horsley, Surrey, KT24 6DT
(For further information contact: Conference Administrator, Tel: 01608 652000.
e-mail: charla@scimednet.org)

Monday 11th July to Wednesday 13th July 2016

- Modern Church in association with WCF: Annual Conference, Theme:
Performing the Faith: Shakespeare, the Theatre and Theology Today. Keynote
speaker, The Most Revd & Rt Hon Lord Rowan Williams of Oystermouth.
Venue: High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts
(For further information: see www.modernchurch.org.uk)



Room for living *Lebensraum*

Spring 2007

Under a buttercup blanket of afternoon sun
The bungalow sleeps
Windowpanes glisten in pristine plastic frames
Sturdy hedges guard the geometric lawn
The white gate stays shut

A cat strolls by, and stops with whiskers twitching
A paw raised, ready to pounce
But no timorous beastie dares disturb the tidy grass
The cat moves on

Inside the curtained cool of the empty living room
Television pictures flicker
Virtual ice floes crash and melt
Hurricanes hurl palm trees and demolish seaside shacks
In silence

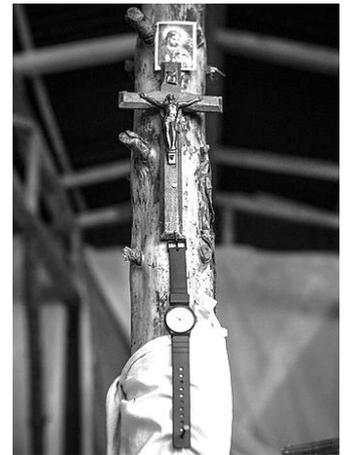
Desperate boats from Africa
Disgorge their human cargo
Within sight of Fortress Europe
Into the sea

The bungalow dreams on
And Armageddon prowls
Beyond the pale.



Summer 2015

Breaking news
Heart breaking news
Assails the peaceful silence before teatime
As the television flickers
In the empty living room
Houses turn to matchsticks as the bedrock
shakes and trembles
Villages vanish under mud slides from the naked mountains
Their trees turned into tables
For the rich and far away



Battles fought with armaments sold to the highest bidder
rage across continents denuded of their gold, their slave-mined platinum
their diamonds steeped in blood
By the rich and far away

Among the sons of Abraham
Brother murders brother
In the name of God or Allah
And still the desperate boats from Africa
Disgorge their human cargo
Within sight of Fortress Europe
Into the sea



The bungalow dreams on
in the heart of Christian Britain
And Isis/Armageddon growls
and howls
Beyond the pale.



Patricia Murphy

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man
Was once a child who among beasts has lain
Still do I love, still shed my light, my innocent blood for thee

Edith Sitwell (Still falls the rain: the raids 1940)



'The migrants' church in Calais is a place of raw prayer and defiant hope'
(Giles Fraser, formerly Canon of St Pauls)