

De Numine

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Please note suggested word limits for submissions.

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The Editor

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Editorial

Thanks to the initiative, backed up by a kind donation, from a long-time member of the former Society, now of the Alister Hardy Trust, we are able to use colour again for *De Numine*; in this issue we have used it for some of the pictures in the text, and Jean is also designing a new cover, which we hope to have ready for the 50th anniversary of the Archive's inception next year. This year's cover is a step towards this end; we are at present trying to source suitable photographs of New Grange in Ireland from which our triple spiral icon is taken.

I often find a theme running through each issue of *De Numine*, but this time what I keep coming back to is variety – in the wide spread of themes with which the articles engage. Then in 'Remembering Friends', while we might be sad that for a number of members this is their last appearance in *De Numine*, it is apparent, not least from the photographs, what a varied and interesting group of people we are. On a personal note I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to Jenny Jones on the death last month of her husband Dr Howard Jones, and to Mary Cook whose husband Eric passed on earlier this month. There are tributes to both of them in 'Remembering Friends'. Maybe it is no coincidence that Howard's article on re-incarnation should appear in the issue ...

The recent sad loss of several of our members brings me to the report by Mike Rush, AHT Webmaster, where he broaches the subject of attracting new members, and asks us to consider how we can appeal to a younger generation. Dr Sarah Boss, the departing Membership secretary, does comment in her report that membership has risen slightly, but I'm not sure that our average age has come down significantly ...

We have reports in this issue from the three local groups still standing, so to speak. A special acknowledgement is due to Mary Cook and the South East Wales group for carrying the torch through the changes from AHS to AHSSSE (an acronym which Mary disliked intensely) to our continued existence under the AHT umbrella. Other groups, apart from North Wales and Oxfordshire, seem to have faded away, but the S.E. Wales group is flourishing, and has given us much food for thought in this issue: this group has taken on the running of the Llantarnam Gathering in its new incarnation; see the excellent report compiled by participants on pages 35-38. On the theme of variety again, I think this report demonstrates how the different styles of writing add richness and 'readability': including reports from different participants conveys a real sense of group interaction and co-operation.

The report on Easter ceremonies in early Christianity (page 41) is another case in point: three participants offer very different views on Dr Alexander Shaia's erudite and fascinating exposition from the perspective of the Maronite Church.

A final note on the writing in this issue about animals, our connection with them and theirs with the world of spirit: we have examples of human/animal interaction going back to pre-Christian times, animals in the magical world of folklore, and, although not touched on here, there are many tales from the world(s) of the Shamans which include animals in shape-shifting experiences. In previous issues we ran a series of articles on animal symbolism and folklore (issues 39-45). Might any reader be interested in pursuing this subject further in an article for *De Numine*?

Patricia Murphy

Reincarnation: The journey of the human spirit, through successive incarnations that the immortal soul experiences

The history

Reincarnation or transmigration – the recycling of an individual human soul into different physical bodies through time – has formed part of the human belief system since ancient times – at least since the time of the ancient Egyptians. This was one reason why they embalmed the body in order to preserve it so that it could travel into the afterlife or next life along with the animating energy of *ka*. The concept of a ‘vital force’ within all living creatures has taken many forms: it is called *chi* (or *qi*) in Chinese medicine, *prana* in Indian ayurvedic medicine, the *élan vital* as envisaged by Henri Bergson, and the soul or spirit of western religious belief.

The idea of the human body as a vehicle for an essentially spiritual nature – rather than spirit as a ‘property’ of a material body – dates back to the origins of religious literature. The first written texts we have of such ideas are the eastern *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Written *circa* 700 BCE, these form the core of Hindu religion. These ancient Indian texts are about the search for serenity, calmness, and permanence in a world of rapid change, in a quest for eternal bliss. The texts also show us how to integrate spiritual values into ordinary life as the soul develops through a succession of earthly incarnations. There are three paths that the devotee must follow to achieve such a state of bliss: action (*karma*), knowledge (*jñāna*) and devotion (*bhakti*). *Karma* is also defined by contemporary spiritists as the law of cause and effect.

Reincarnation is an experience that many of us will undergo as part of the development of the soul. The majority of people will be unaware of any previous lifetimes – but sometimes, either intentionally through past-life regression under hypnosis, or perhaps unintentionally when we have moments of *déjà-vu* in our current life, we experience fleeting glimpses of happenings in our earlier lives. Reincarnation is an affirmation of the continuing life of the spirit: our earthly experiences build into our subconscious as each of us develops towards life in the noosphere of the afterlife.

There have now been many books written about psychic experiences: out-of-body and near-death experiences (OBEs and NDEs) notably by van Lommel, Lorimer, Osiris and Haraldsson, and Sabom among others; contact with discarnate souls through mediums (several books by Betty, Tynn); and other events that cannot be explained by science as it stood at the start of the twentieth century (Tart, Zammit). Books dealing with reincarnation are fewer (see Stevenson, Tucker and chapters in Carter). At least two spiritually advanced mediums that I know of have exhibited what is called ‘far memory’ – recall of a number of earlier lifetimes; these are Joan Grant and Cassandra Martin. There are even accounts that some people claim to have had of pre-birth memories (see Hallett). Although we have advanced materially over the past few centuries, our spiritual growth has been stunted, largely by religious dogma, but also by our over-emphasis on the material and the rational, placing too little faith in our emotions and intuition. The validity of the events that are reported as psychic experiences is relatively easy to check; various examples are given below.

Instances of reincarnation have not been reported as often in western literature as in the east, nor have they been as extensively studied; but where they have been investigated the confirmatory evidence is

just as convincing as with other psychic phenomena, especially when it is provided by young children who have little experience of the world. The accurate events that such children relate are too detailed for this phenomenon to be dismissed as childish imagination. Reincarnation has been a fundamental axiom within eastern faiths since their inception and its acceptance coheres with contemporary ideas about the soul that are supported by twentieth century science. The idea weaves well into the fabric of spirituality, giving a scenario for our earthly lives as a learning experience (or often a succession of learning experiences) to prepare us individually and as part of humankind to become loving and beneficent souls in the afterlife. Mediums who communicate with discarnate spirits have relayed this message many times over.

Soul is that part of our vibrational energy that includes our love for our fellow man and, if we are fortunate, focuses in earthly life on one special individual in particular in a unique bonding relationship. Soul allows us to create and to appreciate works of art, music and literature. It is also forever a part of the vibrational energy of Universal Spirit that some describe as YHWH, God, or Allah; scientists define this cosmic energy in earthly terms as the zero point field energy that keeps the atoms and molecules of matter in existence. The idea of a cosmic energy that holds a record of human existence has been known since earliest times in eastern philosophy and is called the *akashic* field. Both individual souls and the universal Soul are eternal and inextinguishable. The idea therefore that such indestructible energy is continually recycled in various human incarnations constitutes a part of a wholly consistent picture of the nature of human existence.

The *Upanishads* attempt to shift the focus of religious life from external rites and sacrifices to internal spiritual quests in a search for answers to the challenges of human existence. The *Upanishads* are not parts of a whole, like chapters in a book; each of them is complete in itself. They do not present a consistent philosophy or worldview, but rather the experiences, opinions and lessons of many different sages. When a person achieves *nirvana* or *moksha* (liberation from earthly desires) their *atman* (self) returns to *Brahman* (The Source) like a drop of water returning to the ocean. It is in the *Upanishads* that we meet the concept of *samsara* or perpetual rebirth that the soul must undergo until it achieves *moksha*. Reincarnation is the process of metamorphoses that humans undergo in birth, death and then birth again, always retaining our individual soul.

Although reincarnation has always been a fundamental belief in the philosophies of the east, at the same time, it was also a world-view held widely in the west. It is evident from text in the New Testament that the Jews expected the reincarnation of their great prophets. Indeed, the prophets were already thought to have reincarnated from times past. The Jewish sect called the Samaritans believed that Adam reincarnated as Noah, then as Abraham, then Moses (see Cranston). Reincarnation of the old prophets was also on the minds of Jews at the time of Jesus. In fact, followers of Jesus thought that he was a reincarnated prophet. For example, in Matthew 16 (verses 13, 14) we read

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets

This idea was originally absorbed into early Christianity. For example, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa (331-395 CE) wrote: 'Every soul comes into this world strengthened by the victories or weakened by the defeats of its previous life. The soul is invisible and immaterial in nature; it at one time puts off one body ... and exchanges it for a second.'

Reincarnation was suppressed from Christian beliefs by the Roman Emperor Justinian in 533 CE. Justinian convened an Ecumenical Council and invited 159 bishops from the Eastern Church (who did not support reincarnation) and just six bishops from the Western Church who did – despite protests from the Pope. Thus, at a stroke, reincarnation was removed from its position as a core teaching of the early Christian Church in the West although some Christian clergy held on to the idea.

Greek philosophers also believed in reincarnation. We regard Pythagoras today chiefly as a mathematician, but according to Carl Huffman, a leading scholar on Pythagoras, ‘The early evidence shows ... that ... Pythagoras was famous in his own day and even 150 years later in the time of Plato and Aristotle ... as an expert on the fate of the soul after death ... he thought that the soul was immortal and underwent a series of reincarnations.’ Although little of Pythagoras’ work has come down to us directly, the earliest and best evidence that Pythagoras believed in reincarnation is a famous fragment (Fragment 7) by Xenophanes, a poet and contemporary of Pythagoras. This implies that Pythagoras believed, not necessarily in reincarnation as we understand it today, but in metempsychosis – transmutation of the human soul into the body of an animal.

In Plato we have another classical thinker who believed that the soul is immortal and he also appears to believe that human souls transmigrate in both human and animal bodies. The main subject of Plato’s dialogue *Phaedo* is the immortality of the soul, though here Plato does not speak of disincarnate souls being reborn in human bodies. In the Plato’s *Republic*, he addresses reincarnation by having Socrates’ relate the famous Myth of Er. The story begins with a warrior named Er who dies in battle. His body is collected from the field of battle ten days after his death. On the twelfth day, when he had already been laid on the funeral pyre, Er revives and tells others of his journey in the afterlife. Er said that he and some other departed souls who travelled with him came upon a spectacular place with four openings, two of which went into and out of below the earth, while the other two went into and out of the heavens. Nowadays such a phenomenon as that related by Er would be termed a ‘near-death experience’ (NDE). And indeed, some writers appeal to the Myth of Er to lend support to the case for NDEs (see the closing chapter of Moody 1975 for example). (extract from Heinrich Hellwig, The Immortality Project website, February 2014).

As discussed above, reincarnation is an idea that has endured through the ages, evidenced by activities like the burial of earthly goods with the dead for use in the afterlife, and writing letters to the dead (see Frankfort for an account of ancient Egyptian practices), and by the many recorded instances of psychic communication in the present time with those in the afterlife. Although this has long been a popularly held belief, this does not necessarily mean that it is true. However, evidence that we are dealing here with fact and not fantasy has emerged throughout two millennia, and it is within the last two centuries particularly that compelling evidence for our continuing existence, and reasons why reincarnation should happen at all, has accumulated greatly. The description of the three stages of death in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, although written over one thousand years ago, is very similar to modern accounts of NDEs: the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a collection of writings that relate what happens to human consciousness at the point of death. Osiris and Haraldsson, and medium Lisa Williams, have both written books that give us modern interpretations.

The modern setting

If as incarnated humans we do not follow the path laid out for us in Spirit to develop our individual spirituality, then we will eventually come back and try again! In this way, the thoughts and deeds of

individuals on the Earth plane affect not only our time on Earth but also the wellbeing of all others: every human thought and deed has an impact on the universal or *akashic* field – a situation illustrated metaphorically in the twentieth century by what has been called the ‘Butterfly Effect’. This idea proposes that a butterfly moving amongst the flowers of, say, southern England affects rainstorms in the mountains of the Andes. This image emphasizes our total interconnectedness, or what the physicists now call entanglement. In the science of quantum physics all ‘matter’ is regarded as packets or concentrations of energy, and the components of what we regard as matter (protons, neutrons and electrons) are continually exchanging their properties as matter with waves of energy. This interconnection between people has been described by David Lorimer in his book *Whole in One: The Near-Death Experience and the Ethic of Interconnectedness*. The idea that we affect others by every thought and deed of our own is a spiritual concept that seems to be gathering momentum amongst humankind as a whole. This change in outlook may be described as a ‘paradigm shift’, taking up an idea introduced with respect to science in the late twentieth century by Thomas Kuhn. We need several lifetimes to cultivate this idea and make it a part of our earthly existence. We affect not only our own health and wellbeing by our thoughts but also the physical and mental state of others. This is a rationale for our communication through spirit by prayer and meditation.

Our current definition of reality as that which cannot change implies that it cannot be affected by our interaction with it: the ‘real world’ is something apart from us, which our thoughts and deeds cannot influence for good or ill. However, we know from the effects of prayer and from simple experiments in psychokinesis that this is not the case. Jeff Carreira is one of the most recent to make a case for believing that we do shape our reality by our thoughts and actions. This principle also gives a rationale for reincarnation – in each lifetime we get repeated opportunities to benefit the human world and thereby to develop spiritually ourselves. However small our contribution, as long as it is constructive and positive, it is worthwhile. This provides a function for soul in the process of reincarnation.

Spirit interacts with living cells – of humans, animals and plants – and especially, though not exclusively, those of the nervous system. Though the broad features of our anatomy and physiology are determined by the DNA we inherit from our parents, our daily lives interact with Spirit through the medium of RNA (see Lipton, p.68). The significance of RNA in our interaction with the environment was discovered by Howard Martin Temin (1934 – 94), a U.S. geneticist and virologist who discovered the mode of action of the enzyme reverse transcriptase in the 1970s. For this work he was awarded the 1975 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (shared with Renato Dulbecco and David Baltimore). This enzyme makes complementary DNA (denoted cDNA) from an RNA template – a process called reverse transcriptase. This is the mechanism whereby our environment, and particularly our state of mind, directly affects our own health and wellbeing, and those of others.

The environment is pervaded with Spirit, which unceasingly impinges on our RNA – and thence affects every cell in our bodies. Though the blueprint is laid down at conception by our parental DNA, this is then continually retuned throughout our lives by RNA. Spirit thereby continually affects us and the way we think and behave; and we in turn shape our own personal environment and thence the global environment. Many creative artists have believed that artistic inspiration is the result of interaction between the human conscious mind and the subconscious world within Spirit. Reincarnation gives us the opportunity to use our spiritual evolution for the benefit of humankind:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar

(William Wordsworth, *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*)

This illustrates how persuasive an idea is the concept of our immortality through the ages. Spirit interacts with both the rational and spiritual mind and this is how creative inspiration in earthly life and communion by mediums with discarnate souls is achieved. Over the past few decades, some scientists have written about the fundamental unity of the universe (Lorimer, Polkinghorne) irrespective of diverse religious belief. Religious intolerance is meaningless if we consider that at some time in our spiritual future we may possibly be reborn into the faith of those we now despise, and in the afterlife we will be associating with people from all faiths, or none.

The evidence

There is much evidence of reincarnation from people living in the twentieth century. In Hexham, in the north of England, John and Florence Pollock led a normal family life raising their two daughters Jacqueline, 6, and Joanna, 11. This perfect family picture was torn apart on 5th of May, 1957 when their two daughters and one of their friends (Anthony Layden) were tragically hit by a car. They were on their way to church when the driver lost control of his car and slid into the youngsters. All three children were killed instantly on impact. Both John and Florence were understandably traumatized by this tragic event but clung onto the hope that one day they would be blessed with another child.

Their prayers were answered much sooner than they imagined – a year later John found out that his wife was pregnant again. Florence's doctor informed them that she was only carrying one child but John disagreed with this and claimed she was carrying reincarnated twins. This was a strange claim by John – seeing that his Catholic religion stood firmly opposed to the concept of reincarnation – but this did not stop him from believing. He was convinced that Florence would have twins and that the souls of Jacqueline and Joanna would be reborn.

Against all odds, John's prediction of twins turned out to be correct and on the 4th October 1958, Gillian and Jennifer were born. When the twins reached the age of three months John and Florence decided to move to Whitley Bay. They did not return to Hexham until the twins were nearly four years old. When the family drove through Hexham the twins started pointing out landmarks that they had never been to before. When they passed the school that their dead sisters had attended they described it as 'their school' that they used to attend. The family started to dig out the old possessions of Jacqueline and Joanna for the girls to interact with. Amazingly, they were able to correctly name every teddy bear and doll that the deceased twins had owned.

Jenny Cockell was ostensibly just an 'ordinary' housewife living in the Midland county of Northamptonshire in England. She was also a mother of two children. But there was nothing ordinary about her. From the age of four, she believed that she had lived before as an Irish woman called Mary Sutton, who was born in 1897. The images were fragmentary at first but became much clearer as she grew up. Mary lived in the pretty seaside village of Malahide, just north of Dublin. Jenny traced descendants of her previous life still living in Ireland and Mary's children accepted as valid the memories Jenny had of their mother Mary. She found photographs of Mary and her children and

tracked down the hospital – the Rotundra hospital – where Mary had died. Jenny went on to write a book, *Yesterday's Children*, about these events, which became better known as a made-for-TV movie adaptation of Cockell's book, with Jane Seymour in the title role. Jenny went on to write another book, *Past Lives, Future Lives*, with visions of what she believes could be her future lives, and *Journeys through Time* about a past life in Japan.

From the age of about two-and-a-half, Mandy Seabrook, daughter of Gillian Seabrook, began talking about her sister, also called Mandy, who had died some eleven years earlier. Mandy 2 had never been told of her dead sister's existence, but she began talking about her sister's life. Most remarkably, she not only knew the cemetery where Mandy 1 was buried but could point out the otherwise unmarked grave, though the couple had moved right away from the area some time earlier. She knew that Mandy 1 had been buried with a ball she liked to play with; not even Mandy's parents were aware of that. Mandy 2's recollections of her previous life faded – as they often do – when she started school somewhere between the ages of five and seven.

Perhaps a better known example than those above is that of little Cameron Macaulay, who lived in Glasgow, Scotland. He told his mother Norma that he had previously lived as part of the Robinson family on Barra, a remote island in the Outer Hebrides that the family had never visited nor had any other connection with. When his mother took Cameron to Barra, accompanied by reincarnation researcher Jim Tucker, little Cameron was overjoyed and seemed to remember the house in which he had lived. Norma went to see Karen Majors, a psychiatrist who specializes in fantasies of children. Majors remarked that Cameron's memories of his childhood friends were quite different, in the sort of detail he recounted, from the imaginary friends of other children.

One of the most famous (or infamous?) reports of reincarnation is that of Bridget (Bridey) Murphy, a 19th-century Irishwoman that U.S. housewife Virginia Tighe (also known as Ruth Simmons) from Pueblo, Colorado, claimed to be in a past life. This story has been made into books (such as that by Morey Bernstein) and movies. Then there is Nicola from Yorkshire who from the age of two started talking about her past life. She remembered her previous death – she was run over by a train. She knew she had been a boy, a son of Thomas Benson who had two sisters. Church records showed that there was a Thomas Benson, a railway plate-layer, in the area, with a son born in 1875. Nicola took investigators back to the cottage where she had lived previously.

Evidence for physical manifestations of past life trauma has been reported by psychiatrists Brian Weiss and Ian Stevenson. Dr Weiss, who has specialized in past life regression therapy through hypnosis, has seen several patients with asthma who have past-life memories involving death by suffocation. There is also much anecdotal evidence that birth-marks may be a sign of trauma in a previous life. Psychiatrist Ian Stevenson investigated more than 200 cases of subjects with birth-marks, finding recorded evidence of the claimed traumas. Charles Richet was a French Nobel Prize-winning doctor, whose interests and research spanned many areas, including parapsychology. As part of his psychic investigations he described the occurrence of 'xenoglossy' – the ability to communicate fluently in a language not known to the patient in current earthly life. Ian Stevenson encountered many such cases in his studies. The list could go on and on, but to conclude here is one example of this phenomenon:

Four-year-old Edward Austrian had a severe aversion, which amounted to a phobia, about grey drizzly days. He developed severe pain in his throat and reported to his mother Patricia that his 'shot was hurting'. He then told his mother very detailed stories about his previous life in the trenches in World War I. He told her that he had been shot in the throat and died. At first doctors could not find a cause for his sore throat and removed his tonsils as a precautionary measure, but a cyst developed in his throat and doctors did not know how to treat it. As soon as Edward was prompted to tell his parents and others more about his previous life and talk about how he was killed, the cyst disappeared. Edward's father Dr Donald Austrian and other doctors never found out the ostensible cause, or any reason, for the spontaneous disappearance of the cyst.

There are numerous instances of claims for reincarnation, backed up by evidence corroborating the 'memories' of past lives from relatives or others connected to those who experience them. These claims are also supported by researchers like Jim Tucker and Ian Stevenson, and many others. Belief in reincarnation is just one facet of the shift in human consciousness that moves us towards what Teilhard de Chardin has described as the noosphere – a state of cosmic consciousness in which each of us views ourselves as part of the soul of humankind, and so we are forever part of the Cosmic Soul. Successive human reincarnations allow us to develop spiritually for the benefit of all souls, on the Earth plane and those in Spirit. This belief that we can shape reality for the better is a philosophy that futurist Jeff Carreira maintains is urgently needed amongst humankind: a realization that we can and do shape our own reality and future. Many mediums and medical professionals have been telling us for many years that we can bring on illness by our state of mind but, conversely, we can also help heal our illnesses and that of others by positive thought (Benson, Dossey, Hay, Lipton). The more we concentrate on this idea, the more likely we are to have a less difficult time in our next incarnation.

Howard Jones

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Evolution as a Spiritual Journey and the influence of Teilhard de Chardin

I first became aware of the French Jesuit, visionary and palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin more than forty years ago. He had entered my personal pantheon of luminaries: those who clearly had a profound grasp of the mystical context for human development. But in those early days I found reading his works in translation to be very hard work, they were so densely phrased and so philosophically abstruse that I barely understood them. I would say that they were not very 'reader-friendly', even for a philosophy undergraduate. Nonetheless I could somehow recognise that they had a profound message for our times, and I latched on to certain key concepts such as Christ as the *Omega Point*, and that of the *Noosphere*, but above all, for me at the time, was the evolutionary perspective on the universe and human existence.

Twenty years ago I embarked on a PhD devoted to exploring the connections between psychotherapy and spirituality, and I found that Teilhard could be enlisted to bridge the gap between the *formative* and *actualising* tendencies posited by the founder of person-centred counselling, Carl Rogers, and the Orthodox doctrines of *Divinisation* and *Theosis*.¹ (By then there were more accessible accounts of Teilhard's work available, especially those by Ursula King².) That particular focus of my work found expression as a chapter in a collection I edited in 2010. The chapter was entitled 'What we are meant to be: evolution as the transformation of consciousness'.³

It is the evolutionary perspective that is the significant factor in much of my work. I consider it to be a travesty that evolutionary theory and spirituality have been pitted against each other both historically and in the present (with fault on both sides of the debate). Christianity was for too long associated with a literal understanding of the Genesis account of Creation (and still is for some Christians). Fervent atheists find this association to be a ready target for their disdain, and a reason for their rejection of religion as having a potential contribution to the great evolutionary discussion.

As a result, science and technology largely pursue an agenda untrammelled by spiritual and religious perspectives, and human evolution is increasingly depicted in terms of robotic 'enhancements' of our bodies, and genetic modifications aimed at increasing our intellectual abilities, perhaps also by devising a computer/brain interface. Thankfully the avoidance of a religious or spiritual perspective does not preclude an ethical concern about these possibilities, but there is a sense that what can be done will be done, if not in the more open societies then in those in which there is less scrutiny and public debate. Some of these projects will deliver great benefits in treating or avoiding harmful medical conditions, but at its extremes there is potential for the development of creatures and devices which frankly terrify and appal me, evoking the temptations to 'mastery' of the world depicted in many works of science fiction, including the C. S. Lewis' *Perlandara* trilogy whose third volume is titled *That Hideous Strength*.

Readers of *De Numine* will be more receptive to an account of evolution which incorporates a spiritual perspective, or indeed depends upon such a perspective. The scientific endeavour may be seen to have accelerated through recent history, with the greatest progress being made in recent times. By contrast, the pioneers of the spiritual life have appeared through millennia, and have taught a remarkably consistent message that human individual and collective development, or evolution, consists not purely in external but internal 'mastery', not only in material but in moral progress, not solely in manipulating the world but in developing relationship with it, not in the pursuit of power

over but in relationship *with* the world and its inhabitants. These ‘spiritual Einsteins’ have known that the journey within leads to God (however defined and understood); to enlightenment, love, peace and joy, and that these are the most important goals for human development. I am not suggesting that science and technology should be abandoned and the human race return to some kind of primitive simplicity, only that the perspective on human progress needs to be revised and a spiritually informed balance achieved.

Teilhard de Chardin is certainly to be included among these ‘spiritual Einsteins’. His scientific training and orientation combined with his Christian faith to produce a mystical and evolutionary theology. Through the study of fossils he became convinced of the evolutionary principle at work in the world, and found no difficulty in discerning there God’s continuing engagement with creation. Teilhard de Chardin is a profoundly *incarnational* Christian thinker and mystic. From childhood onwards he experienced the compelling beauty and power of the natural world, and an increasing sense of the energy and connectedness of all Creation. (His combination of sensual and spiritual perception would have furnished a very interesting example of religious and spiritual experience for the RERC.) He identified this energy as God-inspired and *Christic*; for him the whole of Creation is infused with the Divine Spirit, which is in essence progressive and evolutionary. The Incarnation of Christ is a decisive moment when all that is material and all that is divine meet in one place and time in the person of Jesus, and thereafter can never be separated again. Viewing the human being as part of the divine evolutionary plan, he believed that Christ exemplified the end point or culmination of this process – the ‘Omega point’ – but that the rest of human beings were also destined for such a destiny, i.e. a likeness of Christ. This coheres with the Eastern orthodox doctrine of *Divinisation* or *Theosis* referred to above.

For Teilhard de Chardin, Jesus Christ, the Omega point of all history, is the unique self-disclosure by God of God’s nature in human form, the conclusion and consummation of *all* creation to which all time is directed, both past and future. In that sense the ‘Christ event’ radiates forwards and backwards in time and also in eternity. Christ is thereby the forerunner and exemplar of the human species.

Teilhard’s Christianity is optimistic about human nature, and the direction and purpose of life, as well as acknowledging ‘the tremendous challenge and responsibility of being human’. In common with all Christianity, he sees the human enterprise as a shared task and as developing towards a ‘shared destiny of the human community’. (King, *ibid*, p 33).

An evolutionary perspective so vast that we might fear that the individual, her value and significance, might become lost; King counters this possible assumption:

But for Teilhard there exists a dialectical relationship between growing personalisation and increasing socialisation, the centering of the human person and the strengthening of bonds between persons in the human community. (King, *ibid*, p 45).

A sign and expression of this bonding between human beings at the spiritual level, Teilhard claimed, was the emergence of the *noosphere*, a network of thought and action, an ethereal ‘web’ or network connecting all humanity around the world: ‘a sphere of human thought and love, of knowing, acting and bonding’ (*ibid*) with a compelling contribution to make to the further development of the human community. The noosphere might be usefully compared and contrasted with the Jungian concept of the *Collective Unconscious*, which is also shared by and connects all human beings.

Unusually in the western tradition, Teilhard de Chardin embraces divinisation as an evolutionary concept:

To come up to his full measure, *he* (the human being) *must become conscious of his infinite capacity to carry himself still further*; he must realise the duties it involves, and he must feel its intoxicating wonder. He must abandon all the illusions of narrow individuals and extend himself, intellectually and emotionally, to the dimensions of the universe: and this even though his mind is reeling at the prospect of his new greatness, he should think that he is already in the possession of the divine, is God himself, or is himself the artisan of Godhead. (de Chardin, in King, *ibid*, p 61).

In the Orthodox Christian tradition divinisation, theosis and deification can be understood interchangeably. Here Alfeyev, an Orthodox theologian writes:

... deification, the ultimate goal of everyone's existence ... God made us so that we might become partakers of the divine nature and sharers in his eternity, so that we might come to be like him through deification by Grace.⁴

From the egocentric standpoint, deification is an absurd act of *hubris*, but properly understood, as moments or longer of participation in *God consciousness*, it becomes truly the goal of human development. For Teilhard, divinisation is an immediate and active transformation of life and activity:

This is what he meant when he spoke of the divinisation of our activities and the divinisation of our passivities – that all that we are, all we do and all we suffer, can be transformed into a spiritual activity, thereby deeply transforming its meaning by giving it value and purpose. (King, *ibid*, p 97).

Thus we find in Teilhard de Chardin a Christian mystical writer for whom doctrine is less important than experience – although it can of course inform experience – and for whom a Christian view of human nature is positive and even optimistic. His 'optimism' had stood the test of exposure to some of the worst sights a human being could contemplate, as a stretcher bearer on the front line throughout the First World War. He also could be said to be speaking directly to our times from half a century ago, in suggesting that as secular humanism discerns a dimension of human experience which can only be termed spiritual, so Christian religion needs to learn from our scientific and psychological knowledge:

Christianity is led to the discovery, *below God*, of earthly values, while humanism is led to the discovery, *above the world*, of the place of a God (King, *ibid*, p 97).

Teilhard's vision and understanding are expressed powerfully in the context of a Christian faith. But his insights can be translated into other spiritual contexts and maintain a great deal of their meaning and value. By this I do not mean that his Christic faith was a superficial or optional context for his ideas; he was incorporated and identified with that faith at the deepest level. His vision is of a unifying divine energy, inter-penetrating and connecting all matter and phenomena, an energy which is of its essence intelligent, purposive and evolutionary. Human beings represent the highest expression of this energy made conscious and reflexive; and (a) certain enlightened human being(s) reveal the goal and destiny of this creative evolution. All this can be embraced in a wider context of spiritual understanding than the purely Christian, perhaps at the point at which Faith becomes universal.

Deepak Chopra is a contemporary spiritual writer whose work embraces many traditions, and he could be said to partake of the vision outlined above. For Chopra, Mind or Awareness precedes

matter, Mind, which is of its essence seeking greater complexity and coherence, evolves through the stages of matter and life to reach human and cosmic consciousness, exemplified in human enlightened beings such as Christ and Buddha.⁵

Whether we are engaging with the Christian world view of Teilhard de Chardin, or with emerging spiritual views across or beyond different traditions, evolution as the development and transformation of consciousness offers a vital and compelling perspective on this stage in human history. Scientific developments will undoubtedly whisk us along a path of breathless technological change, some of which may well make us question what it means to be human (and, for the religiously minded, made in God's image and likeness), and how far such change is ethically and psychologically compatible with our deepest values. I would suggest that there are reference points which can help to answer these questions, among them the evolutionary spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin described in this article, and the psychological understanding of the human being developed by Carl Rogers and his successors in the domain of the person-centred approach to therapy. Rogers was fond of a saying by Lao-tse:

It is as though he listened
And such listening as his enfolds us in a silence
In which at last we begin to hear
What we are meant to be.

We need all available resources to inform the contemporary debate about 'what we are meant to be'.

Jeff Leonardi

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The God Shift: Exploring Beyond Boundaries

Part 1

'It takes so many thousand years to wake. But will you wake, for pity's sake?' (Christopher Fry, *A Sleep of Prisoners*). To put it in another way: Are we, in essence, extremely complex biological mechanisms, where the different bits, or parts, of our bodies work together between the poles of birth and death, to produce what we call 'ourselves'? Or do you think, do you feel, that there is hope for 'something more' for yourself, indeed for all life, beyond what we can understand, beyond what we can see, and touch and measure? Life, of course can be confusing, and you may feel you don't know. You may or may not agree with Hamlet in Shakespeare's play: 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than this world dreams of.'

So, are we simply complex, finite biological mechanisms, or something more ...? Another way of looking at this is to ask the question: Who, in reality, are we? If I ask my G.P. who I am he will probably refer me to a psychologist. But this question goes deeper. Is it possible to look beyond the outer form upon which we have become so fixated? We all have our particular characteristics, our name, date of birth, ethnicity; all the things which make up our identity and distinguish us from other people, and this can include our religion. But do these say anything about who we really are in the depth of our being? Are we confusing the clouds, the things which we can measure and define, the things with boundaries, for the sky, which is limitless?

I want to suggest that our inner lives, our thoughts, our feelings and imagination, that which is most essentially 'me', is 'beyond boundaries'. In reality there is no physical, objective 'thing' which is me, and there is a real sense in which we only know ourselves through our relationships with others: our family, our friends and all that is around us and beyond us. We are relational beings. I want to suggest that spirituality, in a sense, is about transcending our boundaries, transcending the things that restrict, and separate and divide.

I believe we are all, in essence, spiritual beings. There is good religion which gives meaning to our lives and encourages us to help each other. However, many people say they are not religious, and see religion as being about boundaries, boundaries which are restricting, divisive and sometimes destructive. They may look in hope for more appropriate expressions of faith, or have given up hoping. Too often worship, rather than liberating us, creates boundaries. It imprisons us. The word 'religion' comes from the Latin word *religio*, to bind together. But so often this 'binding together' is to the exclusion of the rest of the world and the soul's health. Any church, I suggest, which is unable to go beyond its boundaries of defined beliefs and regulations is a failed church, unable to connect with others.

Religious traditions and teachings can have their place and spiritual value. But they should always point beyond the boundaries which restrict and separate us, beyond the boundaries that divide. Actually much of what passes as 'tradition' in Christianity is often far removed from the origins of the Faith. The same is probably true in other religions. How much of the teachings, beliefs and attitudes of our institutional churches really reflect the mind of Christ ...? Dr Rowan Williams, writing about my book *Beyond Boundaries*, says, 'I am always keen to see new forms that really try to break out of simple translations of the original ideas, and this is a fine example.' But 'original ideas' are not always as original as they seem.

Sometimes I feel our spiritual expectations are low and superficial. Images of God are put forward which are so far removed from modern understandings that it is not surprising many people reject them. Why must we so often leave our intelligence in the umbrella stand by the church door in order to feel accepted? Maybe we don't expect anything much in a religious or spiritual gathering, and so nothing happens. Why must we tolerate bland conformity and boring platitudes? How often do we allow ourselves to be moved, to be filled with a sense of wonder, excitement and joy, renewed by the life and healing of the Spirit? How often do we find a new sense of energy and love? How often do you feel the essential 'Oneness' that we all deep-down share? How often does this inspire us to bring love to others and change the world for the better?

It is estimated that only about 7% of the British people regularly attend a place of worship, whereas about 25% follow some form of spiritual practice. So what are people looking for today, deep down

inside themselves, and what helps them? How can we assess this? We must tread carefully. We all know that in religious matters there can be differences of opinion, and feelings can run high. 'There is nothing wrong with faith' observed Archbishop Desmond Tutu. 'The problem is the faithful' – that is, the ones who are so sure of themselves, who create boundaries. Some articles of faith and belief are institutionally, and I think often arbitrarily, approved. Some are condemned. Some are considered 'right'. Some are considered 'wrong'. We create opposites. We create boundaries. For instance, the word 'heresy' would once have sent shivers down many people's spines. But usually what was described as heresy was only one side of an understanding of a deeper truth. The Church as an official organisation wanted to maintain power and control, and when Christianity became the official state religion under Constantine it had to be 'either/or', not 'both/and'. We may not now put people to death in this country for their religious beliefs. However religion, or what is presented as religion, can still cause great hurts, and can carry great consequences.

An example of alleged heresy, amongst many we could quote, is the Pelagian heresy. Pelagius was a British monk who lived in the 4th century. He did not believe in original sin – that we are all sinful from birth. This is still a subject under debate¹, but Pelagius was branded a heretic because the Church wanted to maintain control and have exclusive power to forgive. The Church still requires us to say 'I believe in one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins' in the Nicene Creed. But what on earth do we make of this today, that you cannot be forgiven unless you are also baptised? Surely this sort of religious dogmatism can be so damaging. There are many examples in the Christian belief system that reflects this sort of exclusive, dualistic and divisive thinking. Jesus, I suggest, would not have met the belief requirements of most institutional churches today, and would certainly not have been given a 'licence to officiate' in the C. of E. He surely came to free people, not imprison them with boundaries.

An open and honest pursuit of truth is so necessary. Robert Reiss, a former canon treasurer of Westminster Abbey, in his book *Sceptical Christianity*² has this to say:

Many of the bishops ... are reluctant to upset the more traditional members of their dioceses. They also seem to be more concerned with the management of the Church and with questions of form rather than content. Fresh Expressions of the Church are welcomed without examining what is being expressed and whether it is true. For me, the silence of all but a very few bishops is deafening. (p. 12)

Fr. Adrian Smith, R.C. writes in the introduction to his book *The God Shift*³

In all aspects of life – scientific, sociological, political, cultural, ethical, psychological – we no longer express ourselves nor understand our world as our forebears did even a hundred years ago. Yet we are expected to believe in and worship a God with concepts that have remained unchanged since the Middle Ages. Hence the sense of unreality about God, about religion, about the Church.' (p. vii)

I believe we all need a faith which can carry us through the ups and downs of life, a faith which we can honestly call our own. A sound and balanced spiritual life is essential for health and wholeness. We all have to cope with our hopes and fears, our joys and griefs, our understandings and ignorance, the things that inspire us and the things that leave us cold. We are who we are. Most of us, I guess, don't want to be confined within the boundaries of particular teachings which claim that only they

are right. There are big differences today in religious positions towards important ethical issues: assisted dying, gender issues, abortion, human sexuality ... What religious doctrine, formulated maybe hundreds or thousands of years ago, is really adequate to address the complexities of today's world? Perhaps only the call to love, with its broadest of implications, can stand the test of time. And further, what about conservation and ecology, climate change, human population? His Holiness the Dalai Lama says this:

'All the world's religions, with their emphasis on love, compassion, patience, tolerance and forgiveness can and do promote inner values. But the reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate. This is why I am increasingly convinced that the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics beyond religion altogether.'

That is a radical statement, but I believe true. Look beyond the boundaries of conflicting belief systems, and also look beyond the external boundaries that confine us, define us and often make us to be less than we essentially are: the boundaries of ethnicity, money, possessions, social position and even religion. These things are not, I suggest, about who we truly are. So we need to look beyond the differences, the apparent boundaries, that separate us – tear down the walls that divide, build bridges of understanding, cooperation and love. Fr. Bede Griffiths, a Benedictine monk who was a living example of religious syncretism,⁴ has urged us to look for 'the truth at the heart of all religions', that is, beyond religious distinctions which so often hide the deeper truth beyond the frailty of human language, however divinely inspired that language may appear to be. What indeed is truth? Even in the sciences the boundaries of what we call truth are constantly changing. For example, the ancient Greek understanding was of atoms as discreet particles, solid, separate and 'out there'. But boundaries of thought and knowledge are forever changing; we now know that matter is 99.99% empty space, and what we perceive as matter is in fact condensed energy. We have the enigma of dark matter and dark energy. We now believe that visible or baryonic matter in the universe only accounts for 4.5% of all that is. We can go further. Indeed, the universe gets ever bigger the further our instruments are able to probe, probably to infinity ... and whatever makes up the universe gets smaller and smaller, until it disappears. 'The Universe as we know it doesn't even exist' (Sir Fred Hoyle). We need to go beyond this. The boundaries we acknowledge are only human perceptions.

Let us consider the elusive and indeed mysterious subject of consciousness. What is it? The contemporary rational, reductionist view of, quite probably, most people in our secular society today is still that consciousness is simply a product of our biological mechanisms, which, they say, if we don't understand now, we soon will. But how credible is this view? With all the research and reflection by so many people, especially those concerned with neuro-science, there are still no real answers in spite of so many years of study and research. I personally do not believe there ever will be along this pathway.

A view that *is* emerging amongst some leading thinkers, and this includes some eminent scientists, is that consciousness is non-local. It is beyond the brain. It cannot be identified or located in any part of the human physical biology nor in our physical time-bound universe. It has no boundaries. Dr Pim van Lommel, a Dutch cardiologist, writes authoritatively about this in the Journal of Consciousness Studies with reference to near-death experiences (Journal of Consciousness Studies Vol. 20, Numbers 1-2, 2013). The best 'model' is perhaps that of a 'field', like the Jungian collective unconscious or Rupert Sheldrake's morphic fields and morphic resonance. So consciousness is *mediated* through the brain but is not a product of the physical organism, an important distinction.

To put it in another way, 'Separation is an optical illusion of our consciousness'. (Albert Einstein, paraphrased.) So separation is an illusion, and we are all conditioned by our particular perceptions. Max Planck, the founder of quantum theory, said in 1931 'I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness.' As we gain a truer understanding of the real nature of consciousness we realise that, at a deeper level, we are all fundamentally united. Humanity indeed is one. We are all one family, and that includes, as the Buddhists tell us, that we are also one with all sentient beings.

Jonathan Robinson

Part 11 of 'The God Shift' will appear in next issue. (Ed.)

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Spiritual Experience of Animals: Are animals aware of the world of Spirit?

Two Frenchmen chatting in a café contemplating a dish of frogs' legs:

'Mon ami, do you think a frog has a soul?' 'Oui, mon ami, but a very little one!'

I have some reservations when I hear people stating that human future evolution is towards greater spiritual awareness. My early reading always pointed me in that direction – of *conscious* evolution, onwards and upwards towards a spiritual goal. Indeed this thinking influenced such people as Sir Alister Hardy. Yet my present thinking carries a different perspective.

As we dwell more and more in the intellectual we might be creating barriers to the spiritual. The more we stress the importance of intellectual knowledge the more we could be creating a *buffer* against the perception of the world of spirit. A curtain comes down! Spiritual experience may be accepted as 'every-day' in less frenetic, less materialistic societies, whereas *we* need considerable strength of character to even mention this dimension in our own lives. I am with the ancient Greeks in their methods of education which sought to produce a balanced individual, fit and keen physically,

emotionally, intellectually and philo-sophically (loving wisdom). The aim was to have all channels open, all centres receptive. Children, uncluttered by adult paraphernalia, seem to be awake to the spiritual which has not yet been suppressed and denied, as will surely happen to them as they grow older.

But what about the vast world of non-humans? Each living being in the animal world exists fully according to its natural design. Existing fully is a requisite for staying alive – finding food, finding a mate. And this, their built-in purpose, requires all their faculties to be awake. They are true to themselves, no pretence, no ego. Each animal, bird, fish or insect has awareness that differs in kind from anything humans can imagine, though with increased scientific methods, and such dedicated people as David Attenborough, we are beginning to get an inkling of senses we can only begin to understand. How can we presume to understand the language of animals? For instance, a wolf has over 200,000,000 olfactory receptors, whereas we have a mere 400! He ‘reads’ information through scent. There are chemicals being carried in the air of which we have no knowledge, let alone understanding. Fish have a sensitive lateral line that detects and processes aspects of their environment by means of some form of electricity. As with our ancestors, things beyond current understanding could possibly be attributed to some other-worldly dimension of spirit. But to me ‘Spirit’ includes a series of dimensions *within* our own space, yet by and large, undetected. And could it be some animals are not unaware of the dimensions of spirit? (Doesn’t the word ‘animal’ mean ‘with spirit’?)

Not even the RERC can ask animals for their accounts of spiritual encounters! But humans recount stories about their pets possibly perceiving subtle forces; stories of dogs knowing when their owners are in trouble, even at considerable distances, stories of animals being able to predict events. Such talents as telepathy, prophesy, even healing skills, feeling a common, deep emotion, are all categorised by many people as being connected to the spiritual, but all these capabilities are reportedly present in pets. I find as much love, tenderness, empathy, compassion, joy, misery, sense of humour and selfless service among other species at least to the extent that I find it in our own species. Whether they possess a ‘soul’ is a matter of concepts, what we understand by that word – a discussion I think we’ll keep for another time!

The following two anecdotes seem to confirm a connection between animals and the world of spirit. The first one was told to me by a friend whose horse I used to ride, and shows how horses can be affected by the unseen. We sometimes rode along a straight stretch of country lane, and this was the site of her tale. She told me how the horses would become extremely perturbed and refuse to pass beyond a certain point. A number of years earlier, there had been a fatal crash at that point and it seemed a great fear was still lodging in the landscape there. The second concerns me and a beloved dog I had when I was young; she was a black spaniel who lived with me for thirteen years. The time came when the vet couldn’t do any more for her cancer, and while I stroked her she was given the lethal injection. That night I dreamed a short, vivid dream. She – Tina – was racing distractedly around, as if covering the entire country, desperately looking for something. Eventually, she found *me*, and my dog and I were reunited. Calm was restored. The dream ended.

That last account was *my* sole experience of an animal ‘in spirit’. I wonder if accounts of animals relating to the spiritual dimension have been collected by the RERC. I’m sure as a biologist, Sir Alister would not have disapproved. Animals are considered by many not to be so evolved as mankind. I would argue that their evolution is complete, as ours is – for this moment in time. I see no evidence

that mankind is undergoing any positive evolution. To my thinking the spiritual world is as much a *natural* phenomenon as the physical world which is more readily perceived. The spiritual dimension is, I believe, perceived by all sentient life, irrespective of its supposed place in evolution.

A strange coincidence happened at Llantarnam Abbey last year, at our annual gathering. During our walk on Saturday afternoon, we went to Upper Cwmbrân (known in some legends as the cauldron of reincarnation, belonging to the giant, Brân – ‘raven’ in Welsh), to experience the enormous ‘bowl’ (cauldron) within the geology of the mountain. As we reached its centre – as far as one can – I was startled by the cry of a raven. I looked up, and the raven was flying over! *Brân was welcoming us!* A feature of all seven of our gatherings had been the ancient saga, the *Mabinogion* in which Brân features as an ancient Celtic king. Another ‘coincidence’ involved a bird: it was the morning of the general election following the Brexit referendum. I was going over the campaign pamphlets one last time, and changed my mind – deciding to vote Green. I then went to the kitchen window, and there in the middle of the lawn was a *green* woodpecker – the first time we have seen one in our garden for around 25 years, and never before on our front lawn! That confirmed it – *I had* to vote Green!

It seems to me that the Spirit World – which is completely beyond my understanding – has a resonance with the animal world, enabling creatures to teach us, as we go through life. So it follows that animal life, in its deep unconscious, is *aware* of this dimension, which for them as for ourselves, is completely beyond, yet at the same time, within – within everything. All of life is a Unity. Each is a part of the Whole. Whether we realise it or not, we live for each other. Realising this *is* a spiritual insight – a cosmic illumination. The baying at the moon, the exuberance of young lambs at play, the sheer joy of living, the creation of new life – all exhibit that feeling of Oneness, especially in Springtime! If we destroy habitats, drive species to the brink of extinction – or worse, it is our own souls we are impoverishing and depleting.

There is a southern Indian tradition that reveres all forms of life, because people hold that souls can transmigrate from human to animal (and the reverse?). The story is told of a traveller who was dismayed by seeing a large spider in the corner of a South Indian house. ‘Don’t hurt him!’ the house owner exclaimed, ‘He is our grandfather!’ Also from the ancient traditions of India a certain sage told stories – which have come down to us as Aesop’s Fables – of truth and wisdom coming forth through the mouths of animals. (Aesop, whose name is the Greek for Ethiopian, was an Indian by birth).

Then there are the legends from the threshold of the Underworld which feature dog-like creatures (god-like dogs?): Annubis the dog headed god from the Egyptian animal pantheon, Cerberus the three headed one from the Greek. We find meaning by creating personifications of supernatural forces from our imaginations, often in the form of animals. But we are left with the eastern philosophy of Spirit pervading the whole of the created world, and the worlds beyond, God in everything ... We in our AHT group value the unknowable – *Who wants an answer when you can have a question?* (ancient Japanese proverb heard on the BBC in 2017.)

Mary Cook

Experiences of Dust: Some initial thoughts about the importance of Spirituality in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*.

Philip Pullman's latest volume *The Book of Dust Volume 1: La Belle Sauvage* (LBS) was published in October 2017 as the first of a new trilogy, a prequel to the three volumes of *His Dark Materials*¹ which tells the story of Lyra's search for her father. This search leads her into many adventures, during which she becomes the saviour of worlds and the rescuer of the dead. Throughout all this, the search for Dust and its origins is a continuing theme. *La Belle Sauvage* introduces Lyra and other characters, and gives the background to some of the concepts underlying the cosmology of the series. This new trilogy promises to help the reader understand more about the concept of Dust, and how and why it is being investigated.

His Dark Materials was not without its critics and controversies, not least in its portrayal of religion, in particular the Christian Church and God. Despite Pullman's denials that he was pursuing a secular and atheist agenda through this children's story, many writers have shown that the text can be interpreted as anti-religious and specifically anti-Christian. While the story does present a picture of the Church, the Christian faith and God that few serious scholars or religious people would recognise, it might well resonate with a popular misunderstanding of Christian belief. Pullman presents this distorted picture of the Church and God (in order to shoot it down) largely by including the rhetoric in discourses and discussions between the characters in the story, and therefore can distance himself (if he wants to) from the statements, claiming that they are just part of the fantasy.

Spirituality

Whatever the debate about the presentation of religion, the Church and God, and although Pullman claims to be an atheist (Tucker, 2003, pp. 6, 172) and that there is no concept of the 'spiritual' or 'spirituality' in the story (Donna Freitas & Jason King, 2007, p. xvi), it is clear that the story does have a spiritual context and is replete with spirituality, albeit a materialistic spirituality. Pullman connects the term 'consciousness' with Dust – both seem to have originated in his multi-verse coincidentally; consciousness is termed the 'Ruskalov Field', and Dust 'The Rusakov Particles'. He is thus able to claim they are purely material in nature (LBS p. 384.). However a conversation between two characters includes a discussion about consciousness (LBS pp. 67–68.) In it consciousness is described as:

a perfectly normal property of matter, like an anarbic charge; that there is a field of consciousness which pervades the entire universe, and which makes itself apparent most fully – we believe – in human beings. (LBS p.68)

Just prior to this there is acknowledgement that it might be seen as a spiritual phenomenon, but this idea is countered:

But this field is like no other we know of. Its discoverer ... was investigating the mystery of consciousness – human consciousness – that is, of why something entirely material such as a human body, including the brain, of course, should be able to generate this impalpable, invisible thing, *awareness*. Is it material, this consciousness we have? We can't weigh it or measure it. Is it something *spiritual* then? Once we use the word *spiritual*, we don't have to explain any more, because it belongs to the Church then, and no one can question it. (LBS p. 67)

But there is a recognition that consciousness is not simply a function of the brain:

Since the discovery of the Rusakov field and the shocking but incontestable revelation that consciousness can no longer be regarded exclusively as a function of the human brain, the search for a particle has been energetically pursued. (LBS p. 445)

Although Tucker considers that Pullman believes there is more to life than the material, (Tucker, 2003, p. 174) the evidence from the text seems to deny the realm of the spiritual and claim that all is material (for Dust is part of the material world) yet it does actually point to the possibility that the spiritual may well exist. However this would move the discussion into the theological arena and Pullman seems to want to avoid any acknowledgement of the authenticity of religion and the divine in the cosmology of the story. The acknowledgement of a spiritual realm is also found in the words of Mr Taphouse (the odd-job man at the Priory of Godstow) who speaks of 'spiritual evil', which is worse than 'Night-ghasts, spectres, apparitions and ghosts' (LBS p. 162.) So does it seem that Pullman might be willing to use the term, but possibly only in association with evil? Certainly the presentation of the Church in *His Dark Materials* and in *La Belle Sauvage* is one that seeks to control, deny and be destructive, not life-affirming. Yet there is concession to the possibility that religion can have positive effects, as the nuns of the Priory of Godstow (LBS) are admired for their self-sufficiency (LBS p. 6) and for their protection of the 'saviour child.' The spirituality of *His Dark Materials* might be described as an eco-spirituality, as the story centres on the changes that have been brought about by the interference of humanity in different worlds, and how these have affected the entire multi-verse. The solution to the problem and the means of reversing these destructive processes is found in the self-sacrifice and love that is exhibited by the most unlikely character of Lyra – a somewhat feral child whose parentage is in doubt (at least at the beginning of the story) and who likes to deceive and tell lies (Lyra = Liar). The story can be seen as a pilgrimage of discovery to seek truth and be true, so that love can prevail and the multi-verse saved from its self-destruction. This salvation is, however, a human venture.

The story contains many spiritual beings including spectres, ghosts, angels and daemons. The daemon is of course, not a separate being but part of the human being, and while complex in nature represents that which is described as the 'soul' and the 'conscience' and even to some extent the life-force of the person. Bruner and Ware consider that the daemon is 'a bridge between each character's physical and spiritual self' and that they seem 'to alternate between one's alter-ego, immortal soul, sexual impulse and Jimmy Cricket-like sidekick' (Kurt Brunner & Jim Ware, 2003, pp. 17, 19), but it seems that Pullman understands the humans in the story to be body, daemon and ghost (Donna Freitas & Jason King, 2007, p. 46) where the daemon is like the soul and the ghost like the spirit.

When the adults are separated from their daemons then they become zombie like (human but without a soul or life-force) and when the child Sam is separated from his daemon he dies. Malcolm (Lyra's friend) has to put some distance, geographically, from his daemon in order to save the servant Alice, and this causes him and his daemon incredible emotional pain (LBS p.516). The daemon then indicates that in the story the humans are more than material and contain a spiritual nature as well. Animals, such as the Polar Bears (*Northern Lights*), do not have daemons and therefore have no souls or spirits.

In the place of God (the Authority), who is presented as an 'impostor,' the life-force of the multi-verse is encapsulated in what is commonly called 'Dust', but also 'Shadow Particles' or 'Dark Material.' This is a mysterious substance that at first is presented to the reader as something which cannot be seen, but has consciousness and is essential for life. Gribbin, referring to Jung's concept of the

collective unconscious, suggests that this idea underlies the idea of Dust (Gribbin, 2003, p. 71). In this way Dust influences people, while humans and other sentient beings such as the Mulefa² (*The Amber Spyglass*) have Dust in their make-up.

This life force takes the place of God, whom Pullman kills off, and so could be considered to have a quasi-divinity character. (Donna Freitas & Jason King, 2007, p. 19). It is what holds the universe (or worlds) together (Donna Freitas & Jason King, 2007, p. 25). It has attributes of the divine, in that it is the life-giving force and also craves relationship. This relationship is one that depends on, helps and loves humans, and enables them to be set free to love each other and the universe in an holistic way. Freitas and King consider this is replacing God with a panentheism (Donna Freitas & Jason King, 2007, p. 162). This is another example of how Pullman's spirituality is firmly rooted in the material world.

The reader is told that Dust appeared when humanity (or its equivalent in other worlds) gained self-awareness and consciousness (*The Subtle Knife*, p.81, *The Amber Spyglass*, pp. 236–7) (Squires, 2003, p. 54). Dust is essential to all the worlds, and as it is leaking away they will all die (Gribbin, 2003, p. 143). As the story proceeds in *His Dark Materials* it is clear that the changes, destruction and dangers to the world are due to Dust 'draining away' through windows in the worlds, which have been created by these conscious beings through different instruments, but particularly the 'Subtle Knife.' It is also implied that the 'Authority' shares responsibility for the decrease in Dust as he has confined the dead to the land of the dead. There they are ghosts, having lost their bodies and daemons and therefore consist only of the 'soul' which consists of Dust (consciousness.) Dust is therefore trapped in the world of the dead (Donna Freitas & Jason King, 2007, p. 114), but when Lyra and Will create a window out of this world, the Dust is able to return to the multi-verse and become one again with creation. Then it can continue to be the life-force in the worlds and become part of every creature (Donna Freitas & Jason King, 2007, p. 117). This, then, is the new eternal life.

The salvation of the multi-verse is achieved by the closure of these windows to arrest the draining away of the life force (Dust.) This is Lyra's (and Will's) task, and yet it is only made possible by Lyra being able to have a relationship with Dust, principally through the alethiometer (golden compass) which guides her through her pilgrimage and mission. Therefore this Dust is a quasi-divine spiritual force and yet thoroughly material in its nature.

So while the story may attempt to challenge or even discredit religion and deny the existence of God, it can be seen to have a spirituality and relies on many spiritual concepts, including the importance of spiritual experiences. In the next article we will investigate some of the spiritual experiences

John Burgess

Part II will appear in the Autumn issue (Ed.)

¹ *His Dark Materials: A Trilogy* including *Northern Lights* (1995), *The Subtle Knife* (1997) and *The Amber Spy Glass* (2000)

² The *mulefa* (singular *zalif*) were a species of sentient beings who appear in *The Amber Spyglass*. They were notable for their use of seed pods as wheels and their ability to see Dust with the naked eye. The *mulefa* world was one of numerous parallel universes in the multiverse. (hdm.wikia.com/wiki/)

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AN EXPERIENCE

My Journey

Like so many people who have become spiritually aware through pain, I struggled through much of my adolescence and young adulthood in angst, alienation and absence of meaning. It wasn't until I was 22, after a year of profound loneliness, that my 'rescue' happened. On a fine spring day in South London, while I was walking down an ordinary city street, I was struck by the beauty of a small cherry tree in blossom, set against a blue sky. There immediately followed what I can only describe as a moment of enlightenment. It came upon me out of the blue; I could not explain where from. I knew only that I was in the presence of a superior force or energy, something far greater than myself. Although 'born and raised' a Roman Catholic, I had become cynical about religion and certainly had my doubts about God. My lack of faith was not helped in any sense by my studies at that time into French existentialism and the Absurd! I did not interpret the moment as God-given. It was not so much that I was trying to deny God, but that 'God' did not come into my head. I was just overwhelmed by a sense of 'Ah! So that's what it's all about!', accompanied by a clear awareness that I now belonged, I was *here*, connected to the world, the universe and to all that lives. I could never be lonely again! Darkness had suddenly given way to light. This awareness did make me feel happy, as well as relieved and rescued, yet it was beyond emotional. It led me to wonder, but did not at that moment involve my mind or thoughts. There was another part of me involved here, something else ...

Up until that moment I had not paid much attention to the words 'spirit', 'spiritual', 'spirituality' and 'soul'. Of course, the phrase 'Holy Spirit' or 'Holy Ghost' had been mentioned frequently in church and school, as part of my catholic upbringing. However, I had never really understood how they could relate to anything outside the catholic mass or bible stories. Indeed even when, still in my twenties, I ended up using 'spiritual' to describe my moment of enlightenment, I was convinced, at the time, that it was purely to do with the 'human spirit', a term that I discovered along the way and which best resonated with my awareness. This was *my* human spirit, and I was very empowered by it. It did not belong to religion. And yet all the while, this human spirit was inextricably connected to humanity, to other human beings. It is what connected me with everyone else. I understood my spirit to be part of the universal soul, but not holy or religious. This sense of universality imbued me with a strong belief that I did not have the right or inclination to use my spiritual awareness for social status or power, or for material gain in the flourishing New Age or 'secular spiritual' markets; nor to become a religious leader or monk (despite my respect for these latter paths). What right did I have to indulge my enlightenment, when so many in my world could still be suffering in darkness, understandably more concerned with where to sleep or how to eat than with spirituality? Yes, I explored the 'politico-spiritual' in my writing and my work on the Soul of Europe, but always within the context of social action: my mission to enable others to develop spiritually, especially children and young people who may not have had the chance.

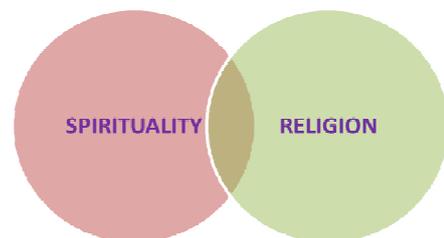
However, I have always felt this mission, my life's work, to be a calling, a vocation, rather than a social responsibility, duty or service. I think this feeling stems from the supernatural, all-transcending presence which graced me during that timeless moment of awakening thirty years ago, and which has inspired, motivated and challenged me ever since. That presence has grown in me from initial awe and a kind of fear, to trust and faith in the power I now know to be Godly and holy. I do not know how or why I know it *is* God; nor why he has called me to work with people in need: I understand and accept it as a divine mystery which I am not here to rationalise, though at times I grumble about it or feel mightily tested! I know only that I believe in God, and that even though there are elements of Christian liturgy and doctrine I struggle with, the Creed now means a lot to me. I do now practise religion, but only because it has a strong spiritual basis, which I have built on with God's grace and through lived experience and awareness, not because I have had religion 'done unto me'. In fact, the doctrinal approach is partly what put me off religion in my youth. In my research into spiritual development, it has not been a surprise to me that one youth group referred to what we came to call 'spiritual faith' as 'a type of religion that's based around spirit – because some aren't. They say they are but they're not.'... Another comment: 'If you've got proper faith in something, it comes from your soul.' Still others tell me how much prayer is so important to them, even though they don't go to church or 'do religion'.

As well as providing me with the opportunity to profess with others my spiritual belief in God, my church refreshes me spiritually through its sacred music and choir, to which I belong. Churches can be spiritually uplifting to the eye as well as the ear, for example through stained glass. Some Christian churches, as well as centres of other faiths, have offered me a truly sacred space to pray or meditate. The place of retreat where I am writing now is run by a Roman Catholic society, but does not push visitors towards religious practice. In the simple but inspiring chapel, you may come across some powerful, and empowering, spiritual wisdom, such as the words of the holy man Dennis Wrigley:*

Holy Spirit, source of all truth, giver of power,
come upon me now
as gently as a dove
or like tongues of living fire
as quietly as a summer breeze
or as a mighty roaring wind
come and dwell within me
Enable me now to do those things which
before were impossible.

It is widely understood that empowerment and self-esteem are essential facets of spiritual development, within or without an explicitly religious context. I have also shared a sense of great self-worth and empowerment, as well as humility, through Quaker meetings. In today's busy, noisy world, the Quaker space for silent prayer is truly golden. Equally I have become drawn to the elements of the Bible which promote spirituality, wholeness and universality. Many of these elements have taken me time to understand, often in the face of deliberate misunderstanding or manipulation of Christian teachings by others. One example lies in the gospel of St John when he reports those oft quoted words of Jesus: 'I am the truth, the way and the light. No-one comes to the Father except through me.' There are extreme evangelists who take these words out of context, as 'clobber text' to drive away people of other faiths, or to beat down anyone they deem too different to hold church office, be they female, gay or 'too liberal'. However, anyone who cares to perceive the real meaning of this gospel will see that St John is referring to the light in us all, and to Christ who embraces all through the unconditional love of God. This light and love are strong spiritual facets of all whole and open-hearted human beings.

Fundamentalism is one issue that drives people away from religious faith, and fuels the conflict between people who belong to organised religion and those who identify as spiritual but not religious. Today I do not travel either the 'religious' or 'spiritual' paths, but both. It seems that both paths have converged on my journey. For me, religion is spiritual when we centre it around God within us, around prayer and meditation, contemplation and reflection, communion and community with others; universal acceptance and unconditional love; social action to care for all that lives. I still respect the view that religious and spiritual are not the same thing, and that spirituality and spiritual development can be wider than religion (a perspective I have myself held for many years), for example in aspects of love and peace. However, rather than embroiling myself in the debate over whether religion is a subset, as it were, of spirituality, or vice versa, I am now particularly interested in life in the space where the two overlap:



Mark Seed

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REPORTS

Report from the Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre, Lampeter

The key event of the last half year was the fourth one-day conference held in Lampeter on 16th of July 2017. The topic was *Spirituality and Health* and keynote speaker was AHT member and former Director of the RERC Lampeter Dr Wendy Dossett, University of Chester. The topic of her Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture was '*Spiritus contra spiritum*': *Spirituality and recovery from alcohol use disorder*. Other speakers were Dr Lymarie Rodriguez, UWTSD, Patricia R. Souza, São Paulo, and Dr Thomas Jansen, UWTSD. In addition Revd Dr Jeff Leonardi and Professor Bettina Schmidt presented the first finding of their joint project on *Spirituality within a Therapeutic Context* which is partly co-sponsored by the AHT. The attendance was good (from within and outside the University) and led to many interesting discussions.

A selection of the papers of the annual conferences in 2016 and 2017 and the research seminar series in 2016 and 2017 will form the foundation of a book proposal about the topic 'Spirituality and Wellbeing' that has been submitted to Equinox. The book will be the second publication coming out of the annual RERC conferences. In addition we are glad to announce that the third issue of the *Journal for the Study of Religious Experience* has been published. This issue includes the keynote lecture of the second annual conference in 2015 delivered by the Revd Dr June Boyce-Tillman, Professor at the University of Winchester. Among the other contributors are two former students of UWTSD, Val Duffy-Cross who graduated with Distinction in the MA Religious Experience, and Luc de Backer who graduated last year with a PhD in Religious Studies. Dr Gregory Shushan, honorary research fellow of our centre is the guest editor of the next issue that will come out later this year. The topic is 'Religion, Culture and Extraordinary Experiences'.

In addition to these activities the work at the RERC Lampeter office continued. The main focuses have been published material (Tom Pitchford) and the unpublished material in the archive (Jonathan Andrews). Tom has so far processed over 600 books from the David Hay collection while Jonathan began to catalogue unpublished letters and other papers in the archive. Tom and Jonathan will also contribute to a new programme of exhibitions that the library has set up in order to showcase the work of the RERC in Lampeter.

In the area of teaching we are delighted to announce that Anne Morgan was awarded the Alister Hardy bursary in 2017. She began her studies in February and has achieved very good marks during part 1 of her degree. She also joined AHT and will start working on the accounts in the next months. Anne is one of three new students on the MRes Religious Experience that began in February 2017. In October three more students began their studies. In total there are currently six students in part 1 of the degree, two are just transferring to part 2, and two are currently writing their dissertation. The module Religious Experience is also studied by several MA students in other degrees of the Faculty of Humanities and Performing Arts.

The next 6 months will be also quite active. Jeff Leonardi and I will prepare the next RERC conference that will take place on 18th July 2018, a day after the Interfaith Harmony conference which gives members the opportunity to attend both conferences. The RERC conference will look at spirituality and wellbeing from a multi-religious perspective. The programme has not been finalised yet and will

be circulated to members later. In addition we will have several guest speakers in Lampeter over the next months. The first one is Dr Alejandro Parra from Buenos Aires, Argentina, former President of the Parapsychological Association (2011-2013) who will speak about 'Personality and perceptual variables associated with mediumistic experiences' (on 19th March). The second one will be Helmar Kurz from the University of Münster in Germany who will speak about Spiritism and healing (2nd May). We are grateful for the ongoing support the centre received from the Alister Hardy Trust and its members.

Bettina Schmidt

For further details of events mentioned above please contact Professor Bettina Schmidt: b.schmidt@uwtsd.ac.uk

Report from the AHT Director of Communications

The Alister Hardy Trust continues to organise events and to network with other like-minded groups.

Members and Activities Group

Although we now have fewer AHT local groups, Andy Burns and I are determined that AHT events will be interesting, affordable and accessible to our members. We plan to hold two main events each year. Last year we held a one day conference in London in June and Members' Day in Oxford in October which I report on below.

On April 14th 2018 we will hold a joint conference with the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies at the Quaker Meeting House in Oxford on the theme of *Meditation, Stillness and Spiritual Experience*. The speakers will be Dr Serena Roney-Dougal and the Reverend Professor June Boyce-Tillman. We look forward to seeing you there (see Events, page 61).

On Saturday 20th October we will hold the annual Members' Day, also at the Quaker Meeting House in Oxford. The 2018 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture will be given by Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke (Joint-President of the World Congress of Faiths and co-founder of the Three Faiths Forum. The afternoon session will consist of an update to members, followed by a panel discussion led by Professor June Boyce-Tillman, examining the current research into religious experiences. Details will be circulated to members when finalised.

AHT Events in 2017

On 3rd June we joined with the British Teilhard Association (BTA) in organising a one-day conference on *Ecology, Science and Spirituality – Friends or Enemies? Building on the Legacy of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Alister Hardy*. This was held at the Essex Unitarian Church in Kensington. Our two main speakers were both familiar figures to AHT members, Professor Ursula King and Professor Keith Ward. Both Professors have given the Annual Alister Hardy Lecture in the past and their Occasional Papers sold well on the day. Stephen Retout of the BTA and I gave a short presentation each on the founders of our respective organisations. I handed out a Timeline, showing the parallels in the lives of

Teilhard de Chardin and Alister Hardy. We ran a bookstall offering a mixture of publicity leaflets for various events, and selling books and Occasional Papers. People mingled and enjoyed a sunny lunch out in the garden.

Members' Day on October 14th was very much enjoyed by all who attended. We were swept up by the Reverend Professor June Boyce-Tillman into *Religionless Spirituality and the Spiritual Experience in Music*, the annual Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture. From the very beginning we were involved as we chanted 'Searching, searching, searching' to the beat of June's drum. Her talk was engaging, instructive, wide-ranging and inspirational. We followed the progress of Sir John Tavener (with whom June had worked closely) as he explored music and spirituality. The talk was illustrated and included excerpts of Tavener's music. It was an all-embracing experience and very moving – so much so that I asked for some moments of silence before we launched into the ensuing discussion session.



Two members enjoying lunch on Members' Day

Unfortunately, due to depleting membership, the BTA had to close down at their AGM following the conference, which was their final event. This conference was a good note for them to end on and we hope to keep in touch with whatever future plans people may have to honour the memory of a remarkable and inspirational man. Another inspirational man, Sir George Trevelyan was honoured as the Wrekin Trust also folded due to falling membership [see *De Numine*, Issue 63, page 39]

We at the AHT are grateful for the continued support of our members and for the work of the two RERCs, in Lampeter and Glyndŵr, which ensure our continued existence.

Marianne Rankin

Reports from the 2017 AGM

Report from the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust 2017

The other day the vice-chair received this note from an MRes* student at Lampeter to whom we had awarded a bursary for the core modules of the course, which embraced the study of religious experience: 'I feel very privileged to be a recipient of the bursary, it means that I can afford to continue with my studies, using it to fund the course fees which is an enormous help for me.' In a way, this epitomises one of the main objectives of the Trust – encouraging very positively the study of religious experience. In addition, we are continuing to support Marianne Rankin in her PhD studies as well as funding the Alister Hardy Professor at Warwick. We are able to give all this research support, which is very much in line with Sir Alister Hardy's original concept of the Trust, as a result of bequests received over recent years, for which we are extremely grateful.

We continue to support the work of the two RERCs at Lampeter and at Glyndwr. At Lampeter, as you will read in Bettina's report, our two librarians have now completed the computerised database of all the accounts of religious experience received to date. The cataloguing of David Hay's library and archive, which he kindly bequeathed to the Trust, is continuing. These books and all other books donated to the Trust are available for loan to members of the Trust as well as students of the University. Access to the university libraries generally is indeed a continuing benefit available to those who join the Trust.

Away from the purely academic, we continue to have the Open Day [now Members' Day] in October. The Keynote Speaker at last year's event, Professor June Boyce-Tillman, presented a most stimulating talk which embraced an example of a religious experience triggered by music. [Details of Professor Boyce-Tillman's address can be found in the Director of Communications' report above.]

As with all vibrant organisations there are inevitably changes to personnel and we would like to pay a tribute to Andrew Village who has been secretary to the Trust for a number of years. Andrew will be remaining a Trustee and we will continue to benefit from his advice and experience. We now welcome Andrew Burns into the role of Secretary – Andy will be familiar to many of you as he was the chair of the Society before its incorporation into the Trust, and for the past year has been very active in the Membership Activities Group. We thank Andy very much for taking on this new role and look forward to working with him for many years. Finally, we would like to thank all those others who do so much for the Trust from the Directors of the RERCs and the librarians to those who look after the membership, produce the *De Numine* Journal and organise the local groups as well as our fellow Trustees, much of whose work is done behind the scenes.

The Revd Canon Professor Leslie J. Francis, Chair, AHT

Dr David M. Greenwood, Vice-Chair, AHT

**The MRes is a Masters by Research in Religious Studies, see issue 63 p25 for more details, or contact Professor Schmidt Ed.*

Report from the Membership Secretary, November 2017

Membership Numbers: The Trust currently has 300 members, which is a slight increase on the number we had this time last year. I have mentioned previously that most new members join the Trust only in order to use the database, and that people in general do not join voluntary organisations in the numbers that they used to. Nowadays, young people in particular expect to keep in touch through social media. I therefore suggest that the Trustees should consider promoting the Trust's facilities and activities by means of Facebook and Twitter, and that *De Numine* should be available on-line [*De Numine* is available on the AHT website, under 'Publications'].

Annual Renewal Date: The main development to report with regard to membership is the Trustees' decision that all members should have their membership renewed at the same time each year. It was decided that September or October would be the best month for the renewal, and I have accordingly stopped sending out first renewal notices. A letter is about to be sent to all members to tell them of the new arrangement. If members who should have renewed their membership in September or October have not done so, it would still be worth sending them a renewal reminder next month.

Corporate Membership: It has been generally agreed that the Trust should go ahead with enabling corporate membership. We have not determined what the rate of subscription should be for corporate members, and I have not made any progress with this, for reasons that are explained below.

Distribution of the Membership List: Another matter that has arisen is the practice of making the membership list available to every member upon request. This is a good practice, since it enables members to contact one another and form local groups, etc. However, it raises a rather tricky difficulty. Members sometimes resign their membership, and others pass away. It is irksome for former members to continue to receive communications from the Trust, and even more so for bereaved relatives to have to deal with correspondence addressed to the deceased. At present, I assure people in this situation that their details will be removed from our mailing list. However, if a large number of other people have copies of that list, then even if I make sure that I send the revised list to all of them (which I may fail to do!), I cannot guarantee that they will all be efficient and use the most up-to-date information that they have received. It is very embarrassing for the Trust if correspondence continues to be sent to former and deceased members. At present, very few people have the mailing list, so the problem has not arisen; but in principle, it could.

Membership Secretary's Personal Circumstances: Unfortunately, I have fallen behind with subscription reminders over the past few months. In April, I broke my ankle, and this put me behind with all my work, including work for the AHT. Since September, I have been studying for the STL (License in Sacred Theology), and this has turned out to demand a full-time commitment, so I have fallen further behind with membership renewals. I had hoped to be able to continue as AHT Membership Secretary, and although the new renewal arrangements should lighten the workload, I do not think that I can continue with this responsibility. I therefore propose to resign as from January 1st 2018. I hope this will provide sufficient time to find a replacement.

Sarah Jane Boss

Margaret West has stepped into the breach and is now Membership Secretary (see MAG report below). Margaret's contact details are on the inside front cover. (Ed.)

Report from the Membership & Activities Group

I am reporting on behalf of MAG which was established one year ago following the newly created CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) status of the Alister Hardy Trust. This is the second AGM under the CIO and I hope to update Trustees and Members with relevant activities over the proceeding twelve months.

Trustees

The new CIO status allows for membership nomination to the Trust and following an invitation this year Ms Tanya Garland agreed to stand for election. She was the only member nominated and joins Mike Rush as the second (of three) 'member' Trustees. I would like to welcome Tanya who is a long standing member and a previous leader of the Oxford & Cotswolds Group. It will be of interest to Trustees to learn that Tanya worked for the original RERU in the very early days and knew Sir Alister Hardy.

Events

Marianne and I are very keen to hold two events per year on behalf of the membership. One will be an annual conference held alternatively in Oxford and London, and the other Members' Day, held in Oxford in October. Marianne reports gives details for both the 2017 events.

Membership

I am sure that Trustees and members will join me in thanking Sarah Boss for having taken on the role of membership secretary at a time of great change.. Sarah's final report appears above. Margaret West (from the St Mary's Centre) will now take on the role, and members will shortly receive reminder letters when their renewals are due. The suggested switch to a single annual renewal date will be put on hold indefinitely due to the change of role.

Points for consideration

At Members' Day, held in October last year, those attending were given the opportunity to discuss any matters arising and the following is a brief summary of that dialogue.

1. Members expressed some dissatisfaction with the date and location of the AGM which they felt does not encourage them to attend. We looked at this question last year when only two members attended the first AGM. After much discussion it proved difficult to find a resolution which would satisfy everyone and it remains a vexed question as to how we can resolve the situation. However, I think the opportunity to have an open discussion during Members' Day proved invaluable and we are able to report those discussions to the AGM.
2. A question was raised about how we might encourage younger people to join and become involved with the AHT and RERC. This matter was discussed at the subsequent Trustees Meeting and will be taken forward in discussion with others (also see the report by Mike Rush on the AHT website below).
3. A question was also raised about how the RERC responds to experiences forwarded by members of the public. It was felt that a more sympathetic reply offering an explanation of how the experience(s) are stored and used should be sent out. It was also suggested that those feeling the need for support should be given links as to where to seek help. Marianne researched this and a re-drafting of the letter will now be used in correspondence sent from the RERC.

Andrew Burns, Hon Secretary, AHT

The Accounts for the Alister Hardy Trust for the year ended 31st July 2017

As is usual for the Spring edition of *De Numine*, I write a brief summary of the financial situation of the Trust for the financial year which ended last July – this is particularly for those who were unable to attend our AGM. This has been another year of much activity, largely owing to the generous bequests received over the past few years. We are, of course, very grateful for legacies as they do provide our main source of income: it is of course sad that we were unable to thank these generous donors when they were alive.

I set out below a short summary of the accounts – a full set of accounts will be available on request for those who wish to receive them. Just let me have your name and address and I'll send you a copy.

<u>Income</u> (including subscriptions £3353 and gift aid receipts £310)	£19,100
<u>Expenditure</u> (including donation to UWTSD of £22,600, various honoraria, and additional expenses associated with increased activity on the part of volunteers and trustees and a donation to Warwick University of £16,000)	£60,196
<u>Net deficit</u>	<u>£41,126</u>
<u>Fixed Assets:</u> Tangible assets (mainly books and works of art)	£50,582
<u>Current assets:</u> Bank accounts and invested funds	£423,907
<u>Total assets less current liabilities:</u>	<u>£473,799</u>

The accounts were unanimously approved by the Trustees at their AGM held on the 23rd November, 2017

Dr David Greenwood, Honorary Treasurer, AHT. January 2018

AHT Website

In the last twelve months the website has had 63788 page views and 15798 unique visitors. Apart from the home page the top five most popular pages are: 1) Personal Stories, 2) Sir Alister Hardy, 3) About, 4) Contacts, and 5) Events. Posting items on the News page tends to increase the number of visitors.

There is a Facebook page, and we may want to consider more of a presence in social media – Twitter, LinkedIn, etc. – but our objectives need to come first. For example, what aspects of the AHT do we want to promote? Who is our target audience? This will make a big difference to how we present the AHT on the web and social media. It's relatively easy to set all of these things up, but they need to be frequently updated with new information and content to get the most out of them. This requires time and attention, and at the moment I rarely get provided with any items for our existing 'news' page.

At the Open Day in Oxford I asked Members to let me know if they have any suggestions or comments on the AHT website but I haven't received any to-date.

Mike Rush, AHT Webmaster

Mike's report was discussed at the Trustees Meeting which followed the AGM and the points are under consideration, including how best to target a younger audience who tend to use social media sites as their preferred method of communication.



Reports from the Local Groups

Llantarnam Abbey

22-24 September 2017: Retreat and South East Wales Meeting

**NO ADMISSION
KEEP OUT**

proclaimed the notice on the gate to the vegetable garden. But a small, old, dark stone propped against the gatepost carried the encouraging letters: 'Peace to all who enter here.' This juxtaposition summed up the talks we were to share – spiritual exploration may be frowned on by some institutions, but abounds in the wisdom of the ancients. What follows is a taste of what we did:



Friday evening

Time and Space, Outer and Inner (Paradoxes) Mary Cook's talk, reviewed by Annarita Ressa

What Mary had presented in such a straightforward fashion was, in my opinion, a perfect expression of Descartes' Dualism but also of Spinoza's Monism. The theme she developed throughout the entire talk was that of 'Paradoxes'. Mary had spoken from her heart, had shared with us some very personal experiences and intimate thoughts, and she clearly described her attempts to give a rational explanation to unexplainable phenomena. To put it into her words: 'My reason tells me one thing, but my experiences tell me otherwise. What would you think?'

And, as I kept dwelling on what to write, I tried to figure out how many people at this very moment, or one minute ago, or yesterday, or last month, or ... had asked themselves the same question. Mary was asking: 'What is real? What is reality?' In the challenging attempt to blend 'rational imagination' with 'experiential Gnosis', Mary's talk opened up a sort of Pandora's box within, letting us question where our real 'Selves' reside and how past and future merge in the eternal present.

In the latest issue of the *De Numine* I had noticed Mary had defined herself as 'A Spiritual Cosmonaut', I could now understand why! The title of her talk was 'Time and Space, Outer and Inner'. Through the eyes of a child first and, then, as an adult, she looked at the concepts of Time and Space, seeing them as deeply connected and yet, somehow ... non-existent.

Mary could not wait to 'grow up' in order to have straight answers to her queries but, then ... what happens when, as grown-ups, we discover that those queries have no straight answers because of their very own Nature? Thank you Mary for your insightful talk.

Friday evening

The Way of Dreams Alan Underwood's talk reviewed by Ken Price

Alan described dreaming as part of the landscape of his life, a universal and natural phenomenon – not from some supernatural or religion based source. He elaborated – 'If I'm walking towards a tree my first thought is not what does it mean; the tree is a part of the landscape'. And so it is with dreams, they are part of the landscape of life, albeit an intriguing and significant one.

His interest in dreams dates back over forty years, to teenage and student years; a period of often solitary exploration of the inner landscape, stimulated and supported by the writings of Carl Jung

and Buddhist philosophy. In recent years he has shared some dreams 'in as raw a state as possible' on his Openfoot website. He selected one to illustrate this, from June 2012, which he called *Zebra Run and Flow*. It was vivid, rich in imagery and symbolism and one of a series of similar themed 'long' dreams over a period of a year or so, each with a feeling of 'review, confirmation and restatement'.

The inner and the outer are connected it seems; his 'rambling through interior landscapes' is much like a walk in the country, albeit one with a secret destination perhaps, which retains a sense of mystery.

Saturday morning

21st Century Shaman Ken Price's talk reviewed by Val Evans

Ken explained in his talk that the shamanic path is not something new to him at all. About 21 years ago, he experiencing a profound personal crisis, he felt challenged about the many assumptions & beliefs about life & living he'd acquired. Ken said that early on in this crisis he heard the words, 'In my father's house are many mansions'. He turned to tai chi and qi gong as possible paths to help him.

After several months off work, he returned to his quantity surveying, but, still searching for meaningful spiritual guidance, he came across a book on channelling & he followed up reading this by going on a course. Ken had earlier spoken in this talk about shamanism with its different tests & trials, meditation & prayer. Shamans were & are healers, seers, and counsellors for their communities. On the channelling course Ken learned that as in shamanism, the channelling healer connects with a powerful & unseen force in the body. If we can tune in to this energy, healing of illnesses & insights & solutions to many of life's problems can be found. Ken likened this power to other unseen powers in wider nature, such as magnetic fields & electro-magnetism. He said that just as these latter forces have the potential to be beneficial to humans, they can also cause harm if they are not understood fully and respected. So it is with the spiritual energy connected to in shamanism & channelling. From Jungian thinking Ken spoke about the concept of synchronicity, which teaches that seeming coincidences can be meaningfully related, and if we allow ourselves to make and accept these connections, we can find another way of gaining insights and guidance for life's challenges. This is a technique Ken follows frequently, he says.

Giving some examples of the spiritual energy he has encountered through channelling, Ken related that while on his channelling course, working with a partner, he felt this energy or 'aura' around the partner's head & ears. After the exercise, the partner then thanked him, explaining that she'd suffered from an inner ear problem following an accident a year earlier. On another occasion, in his car, Ken discovered that all the fuses in his car had blown. The mechanic looking at the car afterwards spoke of the great rarity of such an event. Ken felt that he must have been conducting spiritual energy at the time!

Clearly then, whether this pathway is termed shamanism or channelling or Jungian technique, it has proved a beneficial one and a lifeline and a doorway into a fascinating & unseen dimension for Ken.

Saturday morning

'Grounding' spiritual experience: the rôle of ritual Ken Rees' talk reviewed by Eric Cook

Ken began with a swift overview of the elements involved in his analysis and of some of the philosophical thought around the meaning 'the sacred'. The all-pervading, or *a priori*, nature of it, according to Rudolf Otto, can potentially give access to revelatory events, Ken emphasising how strongly-linked *that* is with the psychosomatic within each of us.

Listing a plethora of interconnections, he strived to contain the maelstrom of topics within a more manageable logic than that of simply having recourse to semantics -- others' definitions and terminologies. He stressed the necessity for 'grounding' one's feelings *before* drawing any lessons from a new, or spiritual, experience. Certainly, there is the danger of a loss of control, or at least a loss of focus, which has to be guarded against (with constant vigilance – *my words*) whether of 'the sacred', or of the numinous, or in a 'kundalini'-type situation which can arise, say, from sheer elation. To counter that danger, a liberating humility appears to be both pre-requisite and essential to avoid distorting influences, even from one's own imperatives!

The various forms of ritual associated with the sacred: celebratory customs, dance, initiations, faith ceremonies, and so forth, indicated a wealth of diverse practices, but the precise purpose of each was unclear, and thus how successfully a specific ritual achieves its purpose was not conveyed either. Even so, Ken's was a courageous, time-limited attempt to squeeze in many allied aspects to help clarify what is ever a relatively complex, but ill-understood subject.

Saturday evening

The Use of the Tarot in meditation: an experimental session Annarita Ressa's presentation reviewed by Ken Rees

Annarita introduced us to the Jewish mystical system of the Kabbalah via a slide of its master glyph, the Tree of Life, giving us a brief exposition of its metaphysical approach to cosmology, and the different levels through which the Wonder of Being permeates and descends through the *sephirot*, from Kether down to Malkuth. She presented the 22 major arcana cards of the tarot pack as tools to work with during our meditation. Both the cards and the various paths between the different *sephirot*, or spheres, on the Tree of Life function as a correspondence system one can use as a map, a guide or orientation, which can give meaning via the symbolism of the Tree and the Tarot concerning one's position in life at any given time. Of course, both Kabbalah and Tarot have many other usages, together, and on their own, but Annarita's aim was to involve people in meditating on a card of their choice, sleeping on the matter, and bringing the results of their meditations to her review session the next day.



Image of the Kabbalistic Tree
[www.shutterstock.com/722982913]

As well as the Rider-Waite tarot deck being used to display the major arcana, Annarita also brought in a few books so people could compare what came up for them with, for example, interpretations in Paul Foster Case's *The Book of Tokens* and Dion Fortune's *The Mystical Qabbalah*.

Sunday morning

(Ken Rees and Annarita had planned to attend Mass in the chapel, but stayed with our group instead to expand on our experiences during the previous day's meditation. MC)

A Late Awakening Ken Davies' talk – a summary report by Alan Underwood

Ken movingly unfolded his path from adolescent atheist to a late spiritual awakening at age fifty-four. Prior to this Ken had forged a successful life in strikingly different work environments; firstly in the merchant navy, then in academia as a psychologist, before moving on to work as a manager in the voluntary sector. Throughout these changes Ken reported feeling positive and upbeat about life. He considered life to be good, he maintained robust health and found the pressures of work stimulating rather than stressful: there was no need to give spirituality a second thought ... His early global travels had led him to witness extreme suffering and poverty and while this had touched his humanity and moved him deeply it had reinforced his atheism – what God could sanction such torments?

All this changed in 1994 when Ken suffered an unusual spell of ill health. Confined to bed for a few days Ken was visited by a short series of vivid dreams. These brought deep feelings of comfort, of imminent discovery, with vivid imagery. Over the next few months Ken experienced more dreams which left him in no doubt that 'I was being alerted to the need for a closer relation to the earth and the universe ... a need for spirituality'.

Dreams continue to be an important connection to the spiritual, but Ken described how shamanic perspectives and practices had, subsequently, also become important to him. Working with a shamanic worldview and the old Celtic calendar had alerted him to the fact that the vision of himself that he had held for so long was to a large extent a socially constructed, relative, perspective. Engaging with shamanic practices loosened its grip, allowing a re-creation of the imaginal self to take place.

In the Spring of 1996, high on a Welsh hill, Ken found that while he had not consciously set out on a spiritual quest, he now felt that he had come home. Doubts and fears had drained away ... little did he realise that his journey was just beginning.



At the end of the weekend, it was unanimously agreed that this had been the most fruitful and worthwhile 'gathering' yet.



Compiled by Mary Cook

North Wales Group

The Fruits of Persistence?

Being followers of Sir Alister Hardy, we're all, I hope, supporters of the notion of 'fruits' of profound experiences: how during and after religion/spiritual/mystical/ transcendent experiences we are changed. What if we apply this idea to local groups? As I have described in previous reports, I've long felt that local group meetings that have the conventional speaker achieve very little. For any significant fruits to come from a gathering there needs to be sufficient experiential element for our take on life to be challenged. Do we not need to feel moved in some way, for progress (on our personal growth journey) to take place? For example, to feel a deep and meaningful connection with those we are engaging with, to recognise not just a like-mind, but a kindred-spirit, a fellow thinking, feeling human-being?

Our North Wales group has settled into regular (weekly), less formal, more intimate, smaller gatherings, with a few of us who are willing to bare our souls, and share our personal journeys at an ever deeper level, emotionally and energetically/spiritually. Those few who attend feel these meetings to be of more value than anything more formal or structured.

Keith Beasley is coordinator of Bangor ... Beyond, which acts as the AHT local group for North Wales. Contact: www.meetup.com/Bangor-Beyond/

Oxford Group

I have now sold my house in Oxford and moved to the coast in Dorset, so I have handed over the local group to others. Clare Phillips in Kidlington kindly offered her lovely home as a venue. She can be contacted on her email (see below). We have various subjects coming up for future talks and also several new people who have joined us. Also Jane Skinner, who was an AHS member for years has come back, which is lovely.

We aim to continue with our monthly meetings on the first Saturday of the month.

At the February meeting we had a very interesting talk by Sylvia Gill on the signs and symbols of the Zodiac, with her main talk focusing on the 12 character types portrayed. This was a follow up talk after her presentation on the history of Astrology which she gave us last July. At this meeting Rhonda collected offers for future talks and set out a programme (see Events, page 62).

The meeting planned for the first Saturday in March was postponed due to the snow and will now be held on the 31st March instead. Andrew McIntyre will give us a talk on the gospel (the Pearl) of St Thomas.

I would like to thank everyone for the wonderful support I have been given and all the good wishes too from all involved in these Oxfordshire local meetings. Thank you all for the appreciation I have received during the time I have been the Alister Hardy representative for the area around Oxford and Oxfordshire. It has been a lovely experience for me and it is with sadness that I leave this wonderful group behind. But I very much hope to return from time to time to join future gatherings. I would also like to express my thanks to Clare Phillips for offering her home for future gatherings and I hope someone will soon come forward to 'lead' the group and ensure it continues to meet. Thank you to all.

Tanya Garland

Current contact details: Clare Phillips phillipsclare@me.com

South East Wales Group

Thursday 14th December: *Historical Figures who had Special Relationships with Animals*
talk by Val Evans

Concluding our year, Val Evans continued our theme about the animal world. She initially found it difficult to research, there being very little written around the subject. It seems this is an area that needs to be much more researched, observed and acknowledged. Nevertheless, she gave a very informative talk which afterwards sparked much interesting discussion.

The Mahayana school of Buddhism states that, according to the doctrine of rebirth and transmigration of souls, any creature could be bearing the soul of a dead relative and must be protected to live its natural life – each animal is capable of attaining Buddha nature and must be allowed to make its journey through life. In the third century BCE, the Raja Ashoka waged a bloody campaign against a native tribe, and later in his life converted to Buddhism feeling great regret for what he had done. He also regretted all the animals which had been killed for his food, and resolved to make amends by resolving to put an end to this killing. From then on he vowed to protect not only his subjects, but also all animals and their habitats.

Christian saints mentioned included St Francis with his renowned affinity with wildlife. In the seventh century AD, Adomnan, the Abbott of Iona Abbey, wrote this story of St Columba: Columba, making his way back to the monastery, feeling great tiredness of old age, rested on a stone. A white pack-horse, which carried milk to the monastery from the cowshed came up to Columba, and laid his head on his chest. Somehow sensing that the saint was near death, the creature made strange wailing noises. An attendant seeing this, wanted to drive the horse away, but Columba asked the man to leave the horse be, saying that the creature had been given knowledge by God that its master would soon be no more. Columba then blessed the animal which then turned away from him.

Val brought us up to date, having taken us into various cultures from around the world, each of which holds animal life with a much more sensitive regard than has been our northern European culture in the past. She concluded with this plea: 'Let us hope ... that our scientific understanding of animals continues to increase with our growing appreciation of their ability to provide us with joy, delight and companionship, and indeed much more'.

Our AHTSEW Group will be meeting in Llantarnam Abbey through 2018, thus widening our ability to accept more participators.

Mary Cook



The Easter Ritual in Early Christianity

A presentation by Dr Alexander Shaia , held on 24th February 2018, hosted by Jonathan and Pamela Gaunt at Bachygyddel, Carmarthenshire

The Meaning of Easter for Early Christians

Dr Alexander Shaia's research into Christianity Springtime Easter in its formative period (between the 3rd and 5th centuries) has led him to conclude that its intention and practice was very different from how it is today.

In social terms, Lent-Easter-Pentecost was a communal retreat and festival intended to cement the Christian community's expansion in love, reconciliation, generosity and acts of justice. In those days, a community's union needed to be directly addressed and experienced at least once a year – so that the mystery of the communion on the table and around the table would have efficacious grace, serving as an antidote to the bloody ethnic, gender and socio-economic animosities that swirled in those early centuries.

In personal terms, for the individual Christian, Dr Shaia believes that Easter was about the Death of the Ego: Transformation and Growth in the present moment; baptism in these Easter rituals echoed the age-old customs of initiation – death and rebirth into a higher spiritual plane (the last breath also being the first breath); and the renewal of spiritual practice that countered the dogmatic pronouncements, already arising in the Christian community, that might have decreased the sense of unity over the previous year.

Lent was a three-day community retreat, held around the baptistry (starting at sunset on the Wednesday before Easter, ending on the Saturday at sunset). It was a time of meditation on the Gospel of John: a meditation on union to lessen dogma, to see joy and grace in union. This three-day Lenten retreat which focused on living together, fasting, reconciliation and forgiveness also included various rituals which reminded the faithful about their Spiritual practice, about how to live in the 'now'. The first of these rituals was footwashing, an act which both created intimacy between individuals, and cemented the bonds that held this community of equals together.

Central to Easter itself (which began at sunset on Saturday) were the renewal of baptismal vows on Sunday followed by baptisms of new people entering the faith.

Jonathan Gaunt

An inspiring afternoon with Alexander Shaia

My friend Jonathan Gaunt met Alexander Shaia on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella a few years back. During a recent visit to Jonathan's home in west Wales Alexander gave a talk on the celebration of Easter by the early Christians, which I was honoured to attend and found very illuminating. I was raised as a regular church-goer (Church of England), but in my early teens began to rebel against the hierarchical, male dominated nature of the organisation, which seemed to require only passivity and obedience from me. I craved direct religious experience. I learned Transcendental Meditation and my mother informed our local vicar, who gave me a stern and disapproving lecture, after which I never went back to church.

Involvement in Buddhism and then neo Paganism/Wicca followed, I was drawn to both because they encourage a more personal relationship with the spiritual, much more so than the orthodox Christianity I had grown up with. I also studied archaeology intensively, hoping to learn something of the nature of the prehistoric religions of Britain and Ireland. Research suggests that ancient practices often involved observations of the cycles of sun and moon, and a veneration of watery places, although we will never know the actual belief systems which underpinned that. Despite having officially rejected it, I still felt that Christianity must originally have held a core of, possibly similar, 'truth'. Glimpses might be seen (it seemed to me) in Catholic countries where shrines to Mary and or local saints often involve natural features such as caves, rocks and springs. It was therefore very exciting to see Alexander's pictures of the four armed, cross shaped baptistries of the eastern early church, which contained water and were aligned north, south, east and west, suggesting more than a nod to the natural world and the movements of sun moon and stars.

It was also interesting to hear that a ceremony termed 'Easter' was held every week, (as in modern times Christians attend a Sunday service) which involved a renewal and re-affirmation of belonging, and that the central doctrine (as I understood it) involved a constant process of transformation and 'becoming' and a deepening of the bonds which held the community together. It was also exciting to hear that everyone was a 'priest', encouraged to experience the mystery and transformative effects of the rituals for themselves. The annual spring festival, the big 'Easter' involved several days of intense 'death and rebirth' ritual involving immersion in water and a vigil underground in the cross shaped symbolic womb of the baptistry. Christ was the name for the energy which suffused all sentient beings. This had been present since the dawn of time, Jesus Christ being an especially pure embodiment. Again, the rites were facilitated by the members of the community themselves and involved direct personal experience, rather than being translated by an intermediary.



Alexander also explained that 'In the beginning was the Word' is a mis-translation, and should rather be understood as 'In the beginning was the breath' (of God) – which is essentially the life force which animates all – rather like the concept of Prana, I imagined.

The obvious sacred significance accorded to water and springs in the Celtic regions of the west of Britain seems to have been paralleled in these early eastern Christian rituals. Alexander also mentioned the importance of celebrants aligning with the rising and setting sun during the Easter baptistry ritual, which is echoed by the standard east-west alignment of the long axis of even the earliest Christian churches. The alignment of the baptistries four arms to the four points of the compass, is also echoed in neo-pagan ritual, and (I believe) some native American rituals.

At last! I gained a comprehensible glimpse of the mystery which I had always felt lay there, deeply buried under the ossified form of state-endorsed Paulian Christianity. And it did apparently involve direct experience and communion with the all-pervading 'Christ' energy, and had a practical purpose, too – to strengthen and deepen relationships and bonds within the community. A more sceptical and orthodox friend who also attended suggested to me that there was little documentary evidence to

support Alexander's claims. This may be so but even if what was said during the lecture was 90% interpretation, for me it has the ring of truth and it certainly made some stuff which had been whirling around my head for decades a lot clearer.

Olwen Pritchard

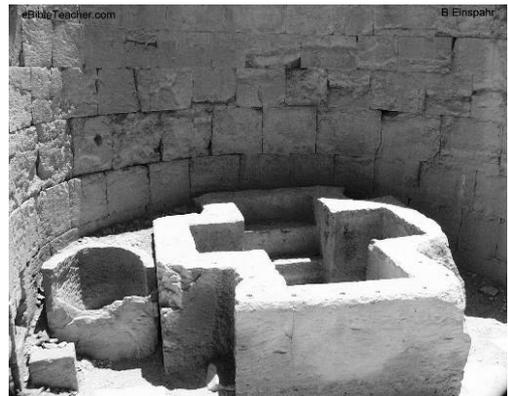
Forgotten and Remembered Early Easter Ritual

Before Alexander's workshop, my experience and knowledge of Christian ritual was as follows:

Baptism is a baby having its forehead blessed/crossed with water from a font with a marginalised mother standing by, God the Father being invoked and godparents promising to bring the child up in Christian ways...Easter is something quite separate, coming once a year to remember Jesus's suffering and death nailed to the cross. Then his body mysteriously disappears and he is seen in the garden by Mary Magdalene, who quickly disappears from the biblical story (which is carried on by the twelve male disciples as they spread the Word.).

Some years ago I woke one Easter morning with the words echoing in my ear 'The Tomb is the same as the Womb'. Those words led me on my last twenty-five years exploration of Goddess imagery and mythology, and Nature's cycle of birth, death and rebirth at Springtime. At Alexander's workshop on early Christianity Easter rituals, I was therefore struggling with the imagery of Creation 'coming from the Breath of God', and not really understanding his emphasis on 'John's Passion' although I did like the account of the intimate ritual of footwashing, recorded in the Gospel of John as the first Easter ritual. Alexander told us how this ceremony was for purification, lessening the ego and being in service.

Then a revelation! Alexander described the Cross as originally a symbol of vitality, wholeness, healing and life beyond death. This was before it became a symbol for atonement in a religion of suffering and pain of death. He showed several pictures of some early baptistries (third to sixth centuries AD) which were deep cross-shaped water baths, with steps going down into their depths beneath the ground. A Tomb/Womb, in fact, where those being baptised were submerged, taking their last breath before going down beneath the waters. Then, gasping for the new and life giving breath they emerged, taking in the Breath of God and proclaimed by their spiritual community and born anew as a risen and resurrected Christ!



After twenty five years, going back to the source of Easter ritual I discovered an integration- of Goddess and God, where resurrection is found as the Breath of God touches the surface of the Mother's dark Tomb Womb waters. Thankyou Alexander Shaia. A communal hot tub for next Spring?

Pamela Gaunt

Dr Shaia is from the Lebanon and a member of the Maronite Catholic Church. For information of his work on the four gospels see his website www.quadratos.com and for more background, and a review of his book by Jonathan Gaunt in issue 63, page 45. Ed.

Photos of Early Christian Baptistries from the Negev, Israel 250-600 AD; with kind permission from www.ebibleteacher.com

Remembering Friends

Bronwen, Dowager Viscountess Astor (1930 – 2017)

It is with great sadness that we heard of the death of Bronwen, Lady Astor, who died on 28th December 2017 aged 87. Bronwen Astor, as she preferred to be called, was a great friend of the AHRERC and Society.



She was one of the earliest people to respond to Sir Alister Hardy's appeal in 1969 for accounts of religious and spiritual experiences. She subsequently met Sir Alister and, through him, also met David Hay, who, in 1986, invited her to join the AHRERC's Advisory Research Council. In January 1992, she duly became a Trustee, staying on in this role when the Alister Hardy Trust was formed in 1994 to take over the running of the Centre from the Research Council. She resigned in 2000, that year becoming a Patron of the Centre.

Bronwen was one of the earliest members of the former Alister Hardy Society. She became a Life Member, and Chair of the Society when it was formally launched in November 1994 – serving in that capacity until 1997. As Chair, and even before that, she took a leading role in vital fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Research Centre: these including, buffet concerts at Dorchester Abbey and Lambeth Palace in 1989; at Lambeth Palace again in 1990, and Westminster Cathedral Hall in 1993. Other events included a dinner-talk at Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire, a fundraising concert at the London Oratory (1996) and a buffet concert in Lambeth (1998). These events in all raised over £68,000 for the Centre.

Bronwen was born in London in 1930, the daughter of Sir Alun Pugh and his wife Kathleen; she was brought up in Wales. She achieved fame as the most celebrated model of her generation, and as a BBC television presenter. She married William (Bill) Viscount Astor in October 1960, then on the death of her husband in 1966, she left Cliveden, the family seat, to live in Tuesley Manor, Godalming, Surrey, opening the house to the homeless. In 1983 she trained as a psychologist, qualifying and running a respected practice; she later gave this up to train as a spiritual adviser. Deeply spiritual herself, she had many mystical and religious experiences throughout her life.¹ She wrote and lectured on religion, and ran a small retreat centre near her home at Tuesley Manor. After moving back to London, she finally retired to live in Chichester. A follower of Teilhard de Chardin, she became a Roman Catholic in 1970. She played a prominent part in the Teilhard movement from the 1960s onwards and, as a long-time member of the British Teilhard Association, served on its Executive Committee from 2003 to 2015, when ill-health forced her resignation.



A funeral mass was said for her at St. Richard's Church, Chichester on Tuesday 16th January 2018 , and a Memorial Mass is to be organised for her in London, the date and place to be announced. She leaves two daughters, Janet and Pauline, and seven grandchildren .Our thoughts go out to her family, and she will be remembered and greatly missed by many people. :May she rest in peace.

John Franklin.

¹ Bronwen gave a frank and moving account of her life and spiritual experiences in a YouTube video interview entitled *Bronwen Astor – 'Love, Faith and Strength*. The video interview can be seen at http://wikivisually.com/wiki/Bronwen_Astor This interview followed publication of her biography *Bronwen Astor – Her Life and Times* (Harper Collins, 2001) by Peter Stanford

Although I did not know Bronwen Viscountess Astor well personally, I was always very aware of the enormous debt RERU/C owed to her support and abilities as someone who thought the spiritual quest was important and as a fundraiser. We were very privileged to have her involvement and I was given her biography to read at one point and was aware of her very remarkable life.

Peggy Morgan (Director 1996-2002)

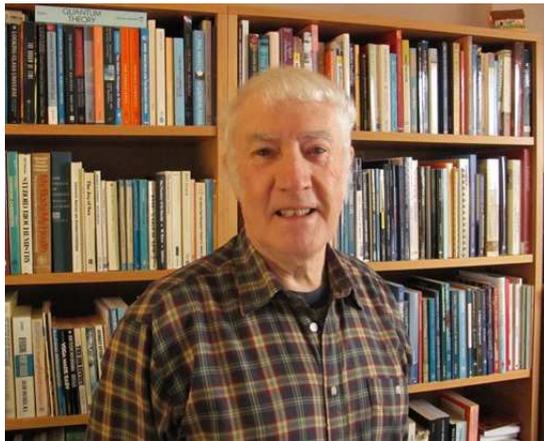
Early on in my time at Lampeter I was fortunate to attend a pre-conference workshop, hosted by the then Alister Hardy Society, at which Lady Astor was present. She led a guided meditation which I really enjoyed: I became a mermaid and swam under the sea – amazing as I have a real fear of water. For that time out of time Bronwen gave me the freedom to explore a wonderful world which I have never been able to enter before or since. Thankyou Bronwen, Lady Astor, for that brief encounter.

Patricia Murphy

Howard Jones (1937 – 2018)

Howard Jones who has sadly died recently at the age of 80, was a regular and prolific contributor to *De Numine*, and had lectured at the University of Wales, TSD Lampeter under the auspices of the then Alister Hardy Society. He and I kept in regular contact through his writing, and his wife Jennifer told me: 'Howard always thought of you and others in Lampeter as friends'. His funeral service, held at the Narbeth Crematorium on February 28th, was led by Mike Ashbridge, a humanist celebrant.

Howard was a distinguished award winning physicist, and was published in the prestigious Journal *Nature*. He accumulated five degrees over his lifetime, and pursued a wide variety of other interests ranging from languages, philosophy and music to botany and geology. Learning was one of his lifelong passions, but he did have other less intellectual interests: I was charmed to hear that he loved ballroom dancing and once appeared on TV in formation dancing! Until he became too disabled through his increasingly severe arthritis, he was a keen walker, and with his wife Jennifer and their son David, he enjoyed many walking holidays in the countryside. He found great peace and renewal in this, always preferring to walk amongst the trees.



Howard loved books and worked for a time in publishing, with John Wiley and then the Open University. It was at John Wiley that Howard and Jennifer met – they worked together to help academic authors publish their books. They found this very rewarding work as in many cases this would improve the authors' careers radically. Jennifer's interest was in spirituality, something she'd explored from a very early age. Howard's view of spirituality was a sceptical one, so this made their relationship an 'interesting' one initially; Howard as a trained scientist could only accept observable facts and rationality.

However, because of Jennifer's passion for the world of the spirit, and intrigued by the fact that she was able to channel healing for people, Howard started to explore it further. Inevitably, with his keen scientific mind, he found a connection between science and spirituality and he was eventually to publish six books on this subject (see Howard and Jennifer's website: <http://www.spiritofoneness.co.uk>). Although his articles for *De Numine* cover a wide variety of subjects, all of them in some sense aim to build bridges between science and spirituality. Like Sir Alister, he progressed beyond the contemporary view of science as a strictly empirical discipline to an adaptation of scientific principles for the exploration of the world beyond the senses. Like Sir Alister, his scientific training and background gave him a sound basis for his wide ranging exploration of 'worlds beyond the world'. Howard's regular contributions have played a highly significant role in setting the standard for the academic part of *De Numine*, which for me is what keeps the balance between serious enquiry into spirituality, and the more light hearted, creative and personal contributions; it is the centre of gravity around which the wide variety of contributions happily revolve.

Howard was told when he was 21 that he was unlikely to live beyond 40 and that he should just take a job that required minimal effort and not over-exert himself. He was therefore amazed to reach 80 – in fact (Jennifer says he told her proudly a few weeks ago) he reached 80 and a half! Jennifer assured me he was pleased to continue writing articles and reviews for *De Numine*, she said it helped greatly in putting the excruciating pain he was suffering in the background a little. We were in communication about his latest submissions for *De Numine* until very shortly before he died, and in this issue you will find his latest and last review, of Gary Lachman's *Lost Knowledge of the Imagination*. There is also an essay on, amazingly, Reincarnation. It is two instalments long but I have printed both in this issue as a last tribute to a dear friend and colleague who worked all his life in the service of the Light. In an email to me about reincarnation Howard says he 'comes down in favour of this idea' (he also says he hopes to come back without disabilities next time). I like to imagine him throwing an understandable, well earned 'I told you so!' over his shoulder to materially minded scientific colleagues as he strides off towards another adventure in the world of spirit.

Dylan Thomas was one of Howard's favourite poets, and a recording of his reading of *Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night* was heard at his funeral. This, the first verse, will always remind me of Howard:

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Howard did not rage, but he went on writing until the very end of his life, with as much passion and insight and originality as always. Our thoughts go out to Jennifer and their three sons, David, Gareth and Ifan. I will finish this tribute to Howard with Jennifer's heartening words about Howard's send-off:

'It was bitterly cold at the crematorium (both inside and out!). I think there was an emotional element as well, but David and I sat throughout the ceremony and just shivered quite violently. One person commented that it was a lovely round-up of what he had achieved in his life – and mercifully short! I think the cold was getting to us all in the crematorium! However, it all went very well and all those who came said that, if there is such a thing as a 'good' funeral, that was it – they said they really enjoyed the music, the poetry and the eulogy for Howard, so I'm relieved that my last gift to Howard was so successful. And the reception afterwards at the house was joyous and very optimistic, so it truly was a celebration of Howard's life.'

Patricia Murphy, with thanks to Mike Ashridge from whose eulogy for Howard I took information and inspiration.

I only met Howard Jones once, when I attended an RERC event in Lampeter, but it didn't feel like a first meeting. I had reviewed several of Howard's books and so I knew how he thought. It was so good to be able to thank him for his erudition and to tell him how much I had enjoyed his prolific writings. Only last year I lent one of his books to another AHT member, who appreciated Howard's thinking just as much as I always had.

I am sorry to hear that he has died and will miss him.

Marianne Rankin

Eric Gladwin (1918 – 2018)

We recently received information of the death of Eric Gladwin, a great friend of the Research Centre, and long-time member of the former Alister Hardy Society. Eric was one of the earliest members, joining in May 1991, and a regular attender at the Society's Open Days and conferences until his final illness. Born in 1918, Eric had a deeply mystical experience when serving as a Captain in the English Army in Egypt during the 2nd World War. This had had a profound effect on his life and, together with other spiritual experience of overwhelming feelings of love, euphoria, light, and sometimes even negativity, prompting him into writing poetry. He subsequently wrote over 640 poems, his publications including, *The beauty of the Feminine, Love and Family* (Trafford, 2008), plus a number of booklets distributed privately, including *Love, Meditation and a Starry Night, The Path of Creation, Our Spaceship Home* and *Peaceful Reflections*. He passed away peacefully, aged 99, on 18th July 2017 (his death not becoming known to us until after publication of the Autumn 2017 issue of the journal).



John Franklin

As editor of *De Numine* I enjoyed several conversations with Eric and printed several of his poems. I was particularly drawn to those celebrating the feminine, as they showed a rare sensitivity for a man of the 'officer and gentleman' class. I also met Eric at an early AHS reception in the Old Hall at Lampeter. In my memory we sat and watched other members, formally dressed, dance by - can we really have put on such grand events in the early days?

I have not printed any of Eric's poems in recent years, but here is one to sound a splendid final note for a life which spanned most of the 20th century.

Patricia Murphy

From the music of the spheres;
Will come the sentience of the mighty Whole,
A great chord swelling to climax

And to Light

Pouring in great lasered harmonies
To this struggling Earth
As piercing shafts of inspiration:

Renewing the lost human Ideal ... of Love ...

Eric Gladwin

Eric Cook (1942 – 2018)

Eric, AHT member Mary Cook's husband, died on 7th March. He was well known in the South East Wales local group, organised by Mary, who says 'I was really touched by the lovely comments from members of our group, saying how much they had appreciated Eric's participation during our meetings. They told me how Eric was always apt, succinct, yet with his usual humour thrown in. And the affection they felt for him too! He was / is my soul-mate'.

He was also an occasional presence, his health permitting, at the annual Llantarnam Gathering and has contributed to the report on this year's event (see page 37). He appeared in the pages of *De Numine* from time to time with original pieces on life, the universe and everything. I met him many times through my association with Mary and I will always remember him with fondness for his big heart, and unique sense of humour.



Eric's funeral is on 29th March at 9.30am at Croesyceiliog Crematorium. It will be related to a Quaker meeting for worship, where everyone who feels moved to may contribute – allowing for the 20 minutes time slot. Refreshments afterwards will be at Mary and Eric's home.

Patricia Murphy.

We sadly record, too, the passing of other members:

Sir Oliver Scott, a Life Member, who was one of the very earliest members, joining the AHS in December 1986. We have only recently been notified that Sir Oliver, a distinguished scientist specialising in radiobiology, died in November 2016 aged 93.

Albert Christopher Scott, a Family Member with his wife. Again, one of the very earliest members, who had also joined the Society in December 1986

Peter Crowsley, who joined in 1993

Miss Mary Fitzpatrick (presumed deceased – correspondence recently returned).

Our thoughts go out in remembrance of all these friends; Sir Oliver, Albert, Peter and Mary.

John Franklin

Two Roses

The soul's extravagance is endless.

Spring after spring after spring ...

We are your gardens dying, blossoming

Rumi

I do believe that roses must be wise teachers of Love. I had another Rose experience this week:



A friend had come round to prune a pale pink rose which rambles high up the cottage wall. There were still two blossoms on it which I trimmed and placed in two glass coloured bottles on the kitchen windowsill. I noticed that one of the roses stood proudly upright, while the other leaned towards it, as if looking up at it adoringly. It reminded me of the difference between male and female, with the male, focused on his individuality, upright and focused ahead, while the woman, more focused on relationship, arcs towards him.

Although I never saw myself and David enacting such a traditional role, I was much more relationship-oriented than him, and I could not help noticing that in the next few days the 'male' rose gradually lost its petals, one by one, as it slowly died. This brought me to the contemplation of how the 'female' rose, no longer having her object of devotion, would now have to realise the folly of putting all our trust in relationships and other phenomena in the world of appearances.

As I pondered this, an image of the sun shining high above the rose presented itself to me – I was being shown that this symbol of the Infinite Divine Being was the true focus of the rose and its source of all nourishment. And of course it had been before the roses were plucked. So the roses became symbols of the usual human condition, cut off from the Source of all Life, Light and Love, doomed to die in the world of phenomena.

Eventually of course the ‘female’ lost all its petals too, so a few minutes ago I put it in the compost bin. Yet as I did so, I had the realisation that each blossom is not a separate entity at all, but all spring from one and the same plant.

Next year, warmed by the returning sun, the rambling rose will put out many new buds, and flower once again.

Mara Freeman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Paddy & Jean,

I received the latest *De Numine* this morning and just wanted to say thanks for another bumper edition.

I obviously haven't read it all yet but skipping through the pages reveals the mixed and varied collection of articles, book reviews, reports, photos etc. I am always surprised how you bring seemingly unrelated themes together so that the finished journal displays a cohesive thread – well done once again!

With kind regards to you both,

*Andy (Andrew Burns, Honorary Secretary, AHT)
September 2017*

Dear Patricia and Jean

I just wanted to say how much I have enjoyed the latest issue of *De Numine*. The experiences submitted (especially Billie's) and the articles were interesting and thought provoking. Thank you for your continued great work on this.

Best wishes

*Rhonda Riachi
January 2018*

Dear Editor,

I saw, looking at the photo that followed Rowan William's heartrending poem (issue 63, page 63), mountains sweeping down to a calm sea, leaving me disorientated, worried how people could be standing in that deep water! My husband, who has better close-sight than myself, saw what it really was, and *also* the Franglais twist. He asked me to write a poem. So I tried:

Plage / Peace

How temporary a beach
How fragile our peace
That image in time
Spoke to me and to mine:
Like spiritual encounters, brief, yet forever:
Seeming shallow now, but deep, deep, deeper ...

Mary Cook,
October 2017



BOOK REVIEWS

**Gary Lachman, *Lost Knowledge of the Imagination*
Edinburgh, Floris Books, 2017, 164 pp. ISBN 978 1782504450**

The title of this relatively short book derives from an interview between the author and poet Kathleen Raine. Using his own individual terminology, Lachman has made the case that the development of science over the past four to five centuries has resulted in the establishment of science as the sole source of meaningful knowledge – a philosophy known as scientism. The result has been that the products of the imagination have been relegated to the world of the arts. I say relegated because the arts – music, literature, painting – are regarded primarily as the sources of our recreation and entertainment. Knowledge of the real world is now seen as the only means of progressing materially as a society, and professionally for individuals.

In the past few decades, several prominent philosophers of science, like Richard Dawkins, Steven Pinker, Daniel Dennett, for example – provoked perhaps by the rise of religious extremism – have written authoritative books maintaining that only the methods of science can give us complete and reliable knowledge of the real world. Lachman is not the only one by any means to make the point that rationalism and empiricism alone would not give us scientific knowledge even of the physical world without the insight and imagination of scientists. I included Dawkins in this group of authors endorsing scientism but it must be acknowledged that, in his book *Unweaving the Rainbow*, Dawkins too shows how an understanding of science inspires the imagination and enhances our wonder for the world.

The book begins with a short historical introduction to the emergence of science as our means of understanding the world. We have seen the development of an increasingly materialistic and empirical outlook at the expense of the aesthetic and emotional. Philosopher and scientist Michael Polanyi* described the human psyche as oscillating between tacit and explicit knowing. Explicit knowing has flourished only in the last four hundred years with the development of the scientific approach to investigation whereas implicit, or tacit, knowing is innate and has been with humankind for all time. The philosopher C P Snow described these two types of knowledge as 'two cultures' – science on the one hand and the arts on the other. In these processes both sides of the brain are involved – the logical left side and the intuitive right. As Lachman says, without the use of both of these faculties we are not 'fully human'.

A number of authors in the past few decades have made this same point – the need for the aesthetic, the imaginative, the inspirational, the mystical and the spiritual. These authors include Francis Cornford, Daniel Goleman, Joseph Goldstein, Iain McGilchrist and Robert Solomon. The current increasing interest that people in the Western world are showing in parapsychology suggests that we are realizing how much knowledge we might lose by ignoring the right-brain faculties we are blessed with. Rationalists, especially those committed to scientism, are most disparaging about relying on information gained by any of these right-brain activities. Such information, Lachman says, is consigned to 'the dustbin of rejected knowledge'.

In Chapter Two, Lachman takes a slightly different approach to essentially the same subject. He reviews Rene Descartes' idea of two worlds as mind and body (or matter), or consciousness and the external world. Lachman relates how Descartes believed that we had innate ideas in mind, and how this differed from the views of his near contemporary the English philosopher John Locke, who believed that the mind was a 'blank slate' (*tabula rasa*) on which our experiences of the world were written. Locke maintained that nothing enters the mind until it is first experienced by the senses.

There is then another interesting section that explores the idea proposed by Owen Barfield that poetry and metaphor are more natural ways of speaking than prose; Lachman suggests these were historically more common: 'They saw the world in a way very different from our own'; and 'Poetry had the power to change one's consciousness a little'. Lachman believes that the transformation in human psyche began (or reached its peak?) with what Karl Jaspers calls the Axial Age, from about 800 to 200 BCE, when the major religions of the world developed. It flourished with Socrates and Plato but the empirical approach then began with Aristotle and continued thereafter. Lachman places the beginnings of what he calls our current obsession with scientism with the discoveries of Galileo and Newton.

The central point of Barfield's (and now Lachman's) thesis is that ancient or 'primitive' (?) tribes did not experience the sharp division between themselves and their environment, between the living and the dead, between subjective and objective that we envision today. We get a glimpse into what is now, to us, this 'other world' in the work of composers, painters and poets. In *Saving the Appearances* Barfield says 'man was a part of nature in a way which we today find it difficult to conceive'.

Chapter Three of Lachman's book is mainly about the German scientist-poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the insight he showed into this more enlightened way of looking at the world, taking account of the spiritual as well as the empirical. Although best known today for his literary works, Goethe was always, at the very least, a highly talented amateur naturalist. Charles Darwin later credited Goethe's studies of the small intermaxillary bone in humans as 'the starting point of our real understanding of evolution'.

Chapter Four is an exploration of the writings of the mystical psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung. Jung was originally a follower of Sigmund Freud, but the two fell out over their fundamentally different approaches to their subject, human consciousness. Freud was a scientist and interpreted mental phenomena in rational terms, always looking for causes. Jung was a dreamer and a mystic who interpreted mental imbalances as due often to 'a deep reaching interior metamorphosis'. He was more concerned with the effects of mental states or episodes. Jung's encounters with a hypothetical figure called Philemon (found also in the New Testament Epistles of Paul) led him to conclude that 'he shared his psyche with inhabitants that had their own will and identity.' This subsequently led Jung to believe that our unconscious mind had two components – a personal unconscious and a collective unconscious. Lachman surprisingly objects to the term 'collective unconscious' on the grounds that this implies some kind of 'group mind', rather than his (Lachman's) interpretation of a form of consciousness that we all share as individuals. This interpretation is very much at odds with what many spiritists believe and it is surprising to see this view expressed by someone who has written so much about mystics and mysticism.

The second part of this chapter is devoted to the life and work of Henry Corbin, a philosopher born in Paris in 1903, who became an expert in Arab philosophy. Corbin is known for his exploration of what he called 'spiritual hermeneutics' – the art of deciphering God's handwriting, a practice referred to by Corbin using the Arabic term *ta'wil*, the 'intelligence of the heart'. It implies 'looking through' phenomena, making them translucent, penetrating their surface in order to perceive their depths: 'Knowledge, then, is something more than the literal facts of experience recounted accurately'. This gives rise to what Corbin calls the Imagined World based on a 'visionary spiritual experience'.

The philosophy of Corbin gives rise in the penultimate chapter of the book to a discussion of Erich Kahler and Kathleen Raine. Erich von Kahler (1885-1970) was born to a Jewish family living in Prague. The chapter explores the 'loss of form in the arts' of the twentieth century. For Kahler, 'Form is a sign of wholeness, a coherence between self and the world, that is necessary and not arbitrary'. Kahler saw the art of the 1960s as representing 'the total destruction of coherence and with it the conscious destruction of consciousness' – an interpretation with which I would totally agree. These sentiments were endorsed by the French-American historian of the history of ideas Jacques Barzun, who died aged 104 in 2012, and the American philosopher William Barrett, both cited by Lachman.

The poet Kathleen Raine was born in London in 1908. She too rejoiced in the wholeness and coherence she saw in the world of nature. Referring to the fields of flowers she observed around her home in Northumberland in the north of England she wrote: 'To see was to know, to enter into total relationship with, to participate in the essential being of each.' The poets Raine admired were the English Romantics, like Keats and Coleridge, so she felt out of step with her contemporaries. However, 'the beauties' that she found in their work were now considered to be not of the imagination: poetry now had to 'conform to the new values of science'. Near the end of this chapter, Lachman again quotes Corbin to summarize the principal theme of his thesis: 'the imagination is a purely spiritual faculty, independent of the physical organism and therefore able to continue to exist after the latter has disappeared'.

In the sixth and final chapter, we have a short exploration of The Responsible Imagination. One of the most spectacular instances of the fruits of imagination we have seen in the twentieth century is that of Einstein's theory of relativity. Einstein, who believed in intuitions and inspirations, said 'Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination circles the world.' Those who

believe that science is exclusively about reason and mathematics are mistaken. Technicians can learn to do the experimental work. Science progresses through the use of inspiration and imagination by those controlling the experiments. Over the past four centuries especially, science and religion have in their separate ways provided a deterrent, a disincentive to free expression through free use of the imagination. But, as Lachman says, such imagination must be used responsibly and coherently and not allowed to have free rein such as that which has produced the chaos of so much modern art. Kahler, Barzun, Barrett and Raine have all made this point too. Some like their nature wild and untamed; others prefer to experience it well-ordered and manicured. But whatever is experienced, it is the spiritual enlightenment that it inspires which is important. 'To paraphrase Blake, in the future, the world's face as it unfolds it, will depend on the minds that behold it.'

I thought this was an excellent book – scholarly but eminently readable for anyone seeking appreciation of the spiritual. For that I believe is what the book is all about – a plea that intuition, imagination, mysticism and the arts be allowed a place in our lives that are increasingly governed by science and materialism.

Reviewed by Howard Jones

* 'Tacit knowledge', is a part of the scientific process that is not verifiable, but which precedes and underlies scientific discoveries. It has been described as an awareness, or kind of 'knowing' of what is not yet empirically 'known' and which therefore does not have to conform to the laws or principles accepted as verification in science. Polanyi argued that it was an essential part of the scientific process. Howard Jones has also identified this phenomenon in his articles, giving examples of the 'hunches' and even dreams that have preceded major scientific break-throughs. .Ed.

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Bettina E. Schmidt (ed.) *The Study of Religious Experience: Approaches and Methodologies*
Sheffield/Bristol, Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2016. 197 pp. ISBN 978 1 78179 257 5

In her foreword to this remarkable book Peggy Morgan emphasizes a demand for 'a variety of approaches and that they be interdisciplinary' (P. Morgan, 2016). The ten contributions brought together here by Bettina E. Schmidt,* meet this demand exactly: from a range of disciplines such as theology, anthropology, history, philosophy, religious studies, music and biblical studies. Contributors, including Schmidt herself, offer a rich and wide selection of approaches and methodologies for the study of religious/spiritual experiences. Specific case studies are provided which enhance the various presentations, creating new avenues to deepen the academic approach to this inherently difficult-to-define phenomenon.

In her introduction Bettina Schmidt gives a short review of the Religious Experience Research Centre's work over the past 50 years, and shows that Sir Alister Hardy's unit for the academic and scientific study of these experiences is thriving. Its main challenge however remains the subjective and interior nature of the phenomenon. A widening of the parameters for terminology, inclusion of various approaches and methodologies and cross-disciplinary work are required to further our understanding. This undertaking is made available to the reader over the following 4 sections of the book, spread throughout ten chapters.

Section One offers anthropological approaches to religious experience in two chapters:

Firstly Fiona Bowie provides an overview of approaches to the subject of paranormal experiences between the 19th and 21st centuries. She draws the conclusion that an inclusive methodology is needed by which cognitive and empathic engagement with the subjects of study broadens the research. In the second chapter Michael Winkelman combines an ethnological, cross-cultural approach to magico-religious practices with a neuro-phenomenological explanation. He brings up the question of how far this rather more constructivist approach might be de-constructed from within by recent physiological research into meditation experiences.

Section Two focuses on specific methodological challenges through the lens of two different case studies and a cultural-linguistic approach in an historical context:

Emily Pierini illustrates the challenges to ethnographic methodology with the example of her study of mediumship in the temples of Vale do Amanhecer in Brazil. Reviewing past (and some current) approaches which have often been concerned with pathologising the experiences, she emphasizes more recent research which refutes these interpretations. Her 'participatory methodology' (p. 69) introduces a departure from traditional anthropological methods in favour of the participation of the researcher in the rituals under study. She argues convincingly for the advantages of participant observation, and for the researchers' ability to maintain a reflective, analytical perspective while collecting their own embodied experiences. Bettina Schmidt's discussion of methodology is based on her study of possession experiences in Brazil as a cultural anthropologist. Addressing the difficulty that within this one region a similar embodied experience can be perceived in very different ways according to prevailing cultural contexts, she argues for provincializing the experience. Following Michael Lambek's theories on provincializing God, she suggests treating religious experience as deictic – embracing local, individual contexts. This approach opens up the inclusion of several possible truths, a 'both/and' perspective instead of the traditional Western 'either/or' perception.

Rather than reaching for a label or explanation, this shifts the focus of study firmly back to the experience and the experiencer. Gregory Shushan poses the challenge of the NDE and OBE against a cultural-linguistic constructivist methodology. Succinctly drawing together examples from across time and cultures he emphasizes the obvious commonalities of these experiences and their occasional but distinct opposition to cultural expectations. From a wide variety of research he makes the case for the importance of the cross-cultural, universal dimension of religious/spiritual experience which shines through the bulk of evidence.

Section Three presents the reader with two distinct approaches from the fields of theology and philosophy.

Robert Pope considers the case of religious experience as seen specifically in Christian theology. A main concern here is that personal experiences should not carry weight over doctrine. Pope reviews the positions surrounding this issue, using some famous historical theologians for illustration, including Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. . He suggests an approach through the theories of 'tacit knowledge' by Polanyi whereby religious experience could be integrated into the construction of theology on this level. Tristan Nash reviews approaches taken by philosophy, where the search for the origin/source on one side, and the question of proof (of the existence of God) on the other, are the main issues with regard to religious experiences. By contrasting William James' approach, based on the 'conversion' of Dickens' character Scrooge, with a revelatory experience reported by Raimond Gaita, he demonstrates the different avenues available for exploration in this field.

Section Four offers three examples of reflections on specific types of religious/spiritual experiences: from the perspective of biblical studies Catrin H. Williams explores the experiential dimension of John's Gospel, relating this to the themes of Sight and Faith. She applies the methodology employed by the biblical scholars of the *Experientia* project, through which she uncovers passages that may have been written specifically to induce a form of common or even shared religious experience in the listeners/readers. In chapter nine June Boyce-Tillman introduces music as a spiritual experience, referring to the long-standing connection between music and the divine in many cultures. Following up various approaches to the theme through past and current research, she demonstrates that after the Enlightenment split up this relationship with the divine in favour of musical aesthetics, the way was paved for a non-religious spiritual experience in/through music. Gary Bunt's closing chapter explores the most recent realm of religious/spiritual experience: the internet. He opens our eyes to the huge variety of possibilities and platforms for religious groups of all descriptions to be found online. From the most obscure to the leaders of world religions, cyberspace is used by people everywhere and needs to be taken into account in modern research into religious/spiritual experience.

I particularly enjoyed the relationships between several chapters in this volume: Bettina E. Schmidt's approach, of viewing religious experience in its specific cultural context for which she uses the term *deictic*, and which she describes as 'provincializing' the experience, meets Gregory Shushan's emphasis on the important dimension of commonality and universality specifically found in NDEs and OBEs, exemplified succinctly by his thorough review of the evidence. Schmidt's approach puts the focus on the experience/experiencer instead of reaching for conclusions and explanations about it, a direction also explored by Fiona Bowie in her inclusive methodology of 'cognitive, empathic engagement' (p. 30). Pierini's position, which is to engage in one's own embodied experience as

researcher in the field would be a development of this approach. Another intriguing relationship exists between Pope's and Williams' contributions: while Pope explains why religious experience is quite a touchy subject to theologians, Williams manages to present an intention to induce just such experiences in the Gospel of the most mystical of gospel writers: John.

This great collection advances and enriches the study of religious experience. Some articles, with their dense theoretical backgrounds, may be a challenge to the lay reader but they are well worth the effort. Each chapter can stand on its own and offers a wealth of material for intensive study. A clear structure, helpful footnotes, an extensive bibliography and good index will be welcomed by any student.

Reviewed by Karen Asmuss Wiggins

** Bettina Schmidt is the current Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre, and Professor in the Study of Religions at University of Wales Trinity Saint David's in Lampeter.*

Marcus Braybrooke, *Widening Vision: The World Congress of Faiths and the Growing Interfaith Movement.*

Braybrooke Press, 2016. 382pp. ISBN 978 1291362329. £15.00

Students of, and participants in, interfaith activities over the past fifty years will be familiar with the name of Marcus Braybrooke, and have probably had the pleasure of knowing him, hearing him speak, or reading one or more of his many publications. This book is a new and updated edition of a work first published in 1996. Such is the dynamic nature of the interfaith movement that its chronicling needs constant updating. The narrative of the book centres on the activities of the World Congress of Faiths, one of the pioneering movements in the English speaking world which met initially in London in 1936. It has continued as a membership body, largely in the UK, until the present time.

That initial meeting looked back to the World Parliament of religions in Chicago in 1893, and forward to growing dialogue between different faiths. However it was not until several decades later that interfaith dialogue became accepted by mainstream Christianity. The declarations of the Vatican II text *Nostra aetate*, similar commitments from other Christian churches and representative bodies of other faiths gave a powerful impetus, from the 1960s onwards, for interfaith dialogue. Marcus gives us an historical survey of these movements before going on to detail the vision of the many individuals who have contributed to this work. He documents the main international meetings that have taken place, especially the revived World Parliaments of Religion which have met every five years since 1993, the centenary of the first gathering in Chicago. The importance of personal meetings and developing friendships is a mark of Marcus's ministry and is witnessed in the book with a capacious index of names and places.

For anyone who wants an overview of inter-religious encounter in the 20th century (and the start of the 21st) this new edition is essential. For those whose encounters with people of other faiths is more recent, this book will help them to understand the pioneering work of men and women who worked in times when such activities were regarded with fear and suspicion. For those of us who have taken

part in some of these activities it is a welcome record, as well as a witness to the work of Marcus Braybrooke as a guide and companion in the ways of harmony and peace in a world which sadly sees continuing intolerance and conflict.

Reviewed by Kevin Tingay

Kevin is a retired Anglican priest who has been involved in interfaith work for many years, and was adviser on these issues in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Two reviews by Marcus Braybrooke:

Tom Wilson and Riaz Ravat, *Learning to Live Well Together*

London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017. 176pp. ISBN 978 1 78592 194 0, £16.99

Learning to live well together is vitally important in over-coming prejudice, in healing society's divisions and reducing the dangers of extremism, and as Evelyn Underhill said long ago, 'Religions meet where religions take their source in God.' 'Interfaith' and 'Inter-spirituality' are mutually enriching. An example of this principle in action is taking place in Leicester, which has been called 'the most multicultural city on the planet.' The St Philip's Centre, the subject of this book – inspired by Jesus' emphasis on the two commandments to 'love God and our neighbour as ourselves' is devoted to helping people in a culturally and religiously diverse city, to learn how to live well together.

The Centre's work focusses on 'Encounter, Co-operation, Trust and Understanding.' The book devotes a chapter, which includes a general discussion and case studies, to each of these topics. It is made clear that members of the same faith may differ widely in both their understandings of and practice of their religion – this is illustrated by a careful discussion of Jewish dietary laws.

The Centre has an imaginative programme for helping children at faith schools to meet and learn about children who attend schools of another faith. (The question of whether it would be better if all children attended integrated schools is not discussed.) The Centre also delivers a range of 'religious literacy' courses to public sector bodies, such as the police, members of the armed forces and health workers. There is a useful case study which looks at the attitudes of members of different faiths at the 'beginning and end of life issues' – again the differences within faiths are made clear. The chapter on Understanding gives brief summaries of the teaching and history of major faiths.

The Chapter on Trust has an interesting discussion on efforts to counteract terrorism, particularly on the Government's controversial 'Prevent' programme, which is sometimes over suspicious – as, for example, in the investigation of ten-year-old boy, whose teacher thought he said that he lived in a 'terrorist house'; what he actually said was he lived in a 'terraced house.'

The book ends with several examples of practical co-operation.

The Centre is, as I know from some personal knowledge of its activities, doing excellent work. Leaders of local interfaith groups, many of which are doing similar important work, will be helped by reading it and also by reading a new book from Latin America, reviewed below: *A Dialogue of Life: Towards the Encounter of Jews and Christians*, which focuses on the dynamics of inter-religious dialogue.

Silvina Chemen and Franciso Canzani, *A Dialogue of Life: Towards the Encounter of Jews and Christians*

New York, New City Press, 2015. 178pp. ISBN 978 1 56548 562 4. £7.60 (First published in Spanish as *Un Diálogo para la Vida: Hacia el Encuentro entre Judíos y Cristianos: A dos Voces y al Unison*, Buenos Aires: Ciudad Nueva, 2013)

In *A Dialogue of Life*, Silvina Chemen, a Christian, and Francisco Canzani, who is Jewish, share what they have discovered in their long partnership. They insist that real listening is essential: 'Without listening, we don't understand and will never get close to the other.' They give considerable attention to the art of asking questions of others with sensitivity, stressing that it is particularly important not to make the other feel defensive.

I am sorry, however, that the book, in commending the achievements of the St Phillip's Centre, feels the need to belittle the work of others. For example, the book quotes – presumably with approval – these words of Archbishop Welsby: 'We need to move beyond inter-religious interaction in which the usual suspects issue bland statements of anaemic intent – with which you could paper the walls of Lambeth Palace – all desperate to agree with one another, so that the very worst outcome could possibly be that we end up acknowledging our differences.' Yet, in my experience, differences, although real, lose their importance for people of faith who join together in campaigning for the abolition of land mines, in trying to dispel the stigma and rejection often felt by people with HIV, or by working to stop genocide, which is often religiously motivated.

Moreover, the mantra 'Respect for Difference,' often hides a reluctance to face the vital theological question of whether – to use theistic language – God has favourites.

The book also led me to reflect on how much the meaning of the word 'faith' has changed over the last fifty years. When Sir Francis Youngusband founded the World Congress of Faiths in 1936, he deliberately chose the word 'faith' rather than 'religion' because he wanted to create a fellowship in which individuals (not representatives), some of whom described themselves as 'humanists', met together to share the spiritual and religious insights which shaped their lives and to work together for a better world. Today 'faith' is often used of religious identity, which may be as much a matter of what you wear or what you will not eat, as of communing with the Divine. Perhaps, 'inter-spirituality' better describes Youngusband's intention.

Marcus Braybrooke

Revd Dr Braybrooke is Joint-president of the World Congress of faiths and has written a history of the Growing Interfaith Movement. (See above for Kevin Tingay's review.)

Books Received for review

Please see below the list of books we have received for review. If you would like to write a review of any of these, or of a book that is not on this list, please contact the Editor, theotokos66@gmail.com who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you.

I suggest readers look at publishers' websites for more titles (see publishers below for suggested sites). They will have details of book contents, which we do not have room for here. I will be happy to send for any books requested that are within our remit.

Please send reviews to the Editor: theotokos66@gmail.com copied to denumine@gmail.com
Review copies which we supply will be yours on receipt of your review.

S. Bullivant, E.O. Genilo, D.F. Pilario, A.M. Brazal (eds.)	<i>Theology and Power: International Perspectives</i>	(Paulist Press, 2016)
Roger Haight	<i>Spiritual and Religious: Explorations for Seekers</i>	(Orbis, 2016)
David L Mueller	<i>Karl Barth</i>	(Hendrickson, 2016)
Lamin O. Sanneh	<i>Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition in West African Islam</i>	(OUP, 2016)
Bettina E. Schmidt	<i>Spirits and Trance in Brazil: An Anthropology of Religious Experience</i>	(Bloomsbury, 2016)
Jon Sweeney	<i>Ralph Waldo Emerson</i>	(Orbis 2016)
Edward M Curtis	<i>Interpreting the Wisdom Books: An Exegetical Handbook</i>	(Kregel Academic, 2017)
Mohammed Girma & Cristian Romocea	<i>Christian Citizenship in the Middle East: Divided Allegiance or Dual Belonging</i>	(Jessica Kingsley, 2017)
Trevor Hamilton	<i>Arthur Balfour's Ghosts: An Edwardian Elite and the Riddle of the Cross-Correspondence Automatic Writings</i>	(Imprint Academic 2017)
Heup Young Kim	<i>A Theology of Dao</i>	(Orbis, 2017)
Ursula King	<i>Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin</i>	(Orbis books, 2017)
Ursula King (Ed.)	<i>Pierre Teilhard de Chardin Selected Writings</i>	(Orbis, 2017 /1999)
Dr Bryan Maier	<i>Forgiveness and Justice: A Christian Approach</i>	(Kregel Ministry, 2017)
Louis M. Savary	<i>Teilhard de Chardin – The Divine Milieu Explained: A Spirituality for the 21st Century</i>	(Paulist Press, 2017)
James Salmon, SJ & John Farina	<i>The Legacy of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin</i>	(Paulist Press, 2017 /2011)

AHT Events

Saturday 14th April 2018

Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies/Alister Hardy Trust Joint One Day

Conference: Meditation, Stillness and Spiritual Experience

10.30 am Registration and welcome
11.15 am Dr Serena Roney-Dougal
12.30 pm Lunch & Book Stall (bring your own, or use local venues; tea and coffee provided)
2.00 pm The Reverend Professor June Boyce-Tillman
3.15 pm Book Stall & Notices
3.30 pm Questions and discussion
Venue: Oxford Quaker Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW
Contact: Marianne Rankin: marianne.rankin@studyspiritualexperiences.org
Cost: £20; AHT and CFPSS members £15; students £5

Saturday 20th October 2018

AHT Members' Day

The 2018 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture will be given by Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke (Joint-President of the World Congress of Faiths; Co-Founder of the Three Faiths Forum)

Afternoon session will consist of an update to members, followed by a panel discussion led by Professor June Boyce-Tillman, examining the current research into religious experiences

Venue: Oxford Quaker Meeting, 43 St Giles', Oxford, OX1 3LW

Details will be circulated to members when finalised.

RERC Lampeter:

18th July 2018

RERC Conference: Spirituality and wellbeing from a multi-religious perspective.

The programme has not been finalised yet and will be circulated to members later.

Guest Speakers in Lampeter:

19th March 2018

Dr Alejandro Parra from Buenos Aires, Argentina, former President of the Parapsychological Association: *Personality and perceptual variables associated with mediumistic experiences.*

2nd May 2018

Helmar Kurz from the University of Münster in Germany: *Spiritism and healing.*

For details of RERC events please contact Professor Bettina Schmidt: b.schmidt@uwtsd.ac.uk

Local Groups:

North Wales Group

Weekly, informal meetings.

Keith Beasley is coordinator of *Bangor ... Beyond*, which acts as the AHT local group for North Wales.

Contact Keith via: www.meetup.com/Bangor-Beyond/

Oxford and Area Group

Meetings on the first Saturday of the month, as previously.

31st March 2018: Andrew McIntyre will give us a talk on the gospel (the Pearl) of St Thomas

Venue: Kidlington

Contact: Clare Phillips: phillipsclare@me.com

South East Wales Group

The group will be meeting in Llantarnam Abbey through 2018, thus widening our ability to accept more participators.

Guiding topic for 2018: *Back to basics*

31st May Outing to Llantwit Major and Llancarfan

28th June *Spiritual experiences that are shared*

28th-30th September: Llantarnam Abbey residential option: *Varieties of spiritual or religious experience. What would you call 'spiritual experience'? Why don't we talk about such experience?*

Contact: Mary Cook: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk 07794 294432

Other Events:

Ammerdown Retreat Centre

29th March – 1st April: *Easter Retreat* with Fr Daniel O'Leary. An opportunity to meditate on, and participate in, chosen themes and ceremonies from the Holy Week liturgy. A silent retreat with special reference to our own suffering, dying, healing and transformation. Everyone welcome.

7th April: *Quiet Day: Seeking Stillness.* An opportunity to take time out from our busy lives to pray, reflect and meditate with the help of Libby Dobson and Sarah Chabowska. There will be five Quiet Days spread throughout the year, on the theme of Journey of the Heart – Seeking Stillness? Each day stands on its own, or together they create a journey throughout the year.

16th to 20th April: *Ammerdown Spring Break.* This week is especially designed for senior citizens looking for a break in the lovely surroundings of Ammerdown, with a good mix of things to do, relaxation and good company.

21st April: *Scriptural Reasoning* with Dr Hilary Marlow. This is a way to explore the sacred scriptures across faith boundaries and involves people of different faiths coming together to read and reflect on their scriptures.

21st April: *Positive Thinking* led by Sue Glanville. Exploring techniques on how to change your mind, overcome negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones.

30th April – 4 May: *Understanding Islam.* Led by Dr Chris Hewer. Chris comes from a background in Christian theology, education, Islamic studies and inter-faith studies (See www.chrishewer.org)

4th – 6th May: *Alive – living fully, living happily, living fearlessly.* Led by Isabella Gauthier.

12th May: *Transitions.* Led by Mary Jo Radcliffe. In this insecure and uncertain world, do you find yourself, willingly or not, leaving behind some ideas, thoughts and ways of life that have, up to now, given your life meaning?

Evening Courses: *Personal Skills for Peaceful Communities*. Led by Professor Simon Keyes. This course is run over six weeks throughout May & June. The themes are: *Listening, Facilitation, Dialogue, Disagreement, Strong Emotion*.

Bookings and further information: 01761 433709 or email centre@ammerdown.org

Or contact Marianne Rankin marianne.rankin@studyspiritualexperiences.org

Emerson College

Holy Week – Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday:

Easter Re-Claimed: a shared Cosmic Easter exploring the meaning of the Gospel story

Venue: Emerson College near East Grinstead

Contact: Mary Jo Radcliffe maryjoradcliffe@icloud.com Tel: 0207 223 2917

Scientific and Medical Network:

2nd – 7th April 2018

Conference: *The Science of Consciousness*

Venue: Loews Ventana Canyon Resort

The Science of Consciousness: an interdisciplinary conference emphasizing broad and rigorous approaches to all aspects of the study and understanding of conscious awareness.

6th – 8th April 2018

Mystics and Scientists 41 – *Eastern and Western Perspectives on Science and Spirit*

Dr Joan Walton: *Overview: Mapping the Field*

Dr Bhakti Vijnana Muni: *Towards a more Harmonious Concept through the Synthesis of Vedanta and Science*

Dr Bhakti Niskama Shanta: *Missing Persons: Has Science Taken the Wrong Turn?*

Prof Ursula King: *Beyond Mysticism West and East: Towards a Global Spirituality*

Prof Keith Ward, FBA: *The Philosophy of Idealism in India and the West*

Catherine Thom: *From Music to Clay – A Spiritual Journey through the Meeting of East and West in Ceramics*

In the chair: Dr Peter Fenwick, David Lorimer. Discussant: Prof Max Velmans

6th – 8th July 2018

Scientific and Medical Network Annual Gathering

Evolving towards a Wise and Flourishing Future

Keynote Speaker: Professor Thomas Lombardo, author of *Future Consciousness: Theoretical Introduction and Future Consciousness: Psychology, Practice, and Wisdom*

Chairs: Dr Peter Fenwick & David Lorimer

Venue: Horsley Park, East Horsley

September 15, 2018

Scientia & Sapientia – a Spiritual Quest: an 80th Birthday Celebration for Prof Ravi Ravindra and Prof Keith Ward. Both have spent their lives exploring the nature of spiritual reality across spiritual traditions and in their relationship with science.

Venue: Colet House

Chairs: Prof. John Hedley Brooke David Lorimer and Dr. Peter Fenwick

Contact: SMN office: +44 (0)203 468 2034 www.mysticsandscientists.org

The Wisdom Study Group with William Meader

Wed 9 May *The Soul and Its Creative Destiny*

St Davids Wellbeing Centre. Cost £30

Contact: Don MacGregor, 01437 454388, donmacg@live.co.uk

Fri 11 May: *The Unfolding: Invoking the Soul's Wisdom and Power*

University of Reading, Park House. Cost £45

Contact: Heather Giles, 01189 752763, heathergiles@antonygiles.plus.com

Sun 13 May: *Heavenly Marriage: The Union of Mind and Intuition*

Abington Barn Courses for Holistic Living, Great Abington, Cambridge. Cost: £75

Contact: Mary Ellis, 01223 891729, maryellis@reikiteaching.co.uk

Wed 16 May: *The Soul of Humanity Evolves Through World Crisis*

Affinity Group, Sarum College, Salisbury. Cost £7

Contact: Sara, 07971 456465, saras797@aol.com

Fri 18 May: *The Evolution of Consciousness*

Forest Row Community Centre, Forest Row, East Sussex. Cost: £8

Contact: John Marriott, 07710 296953 jsmarriott@btinternet.com

Sat 19 May:

Forest Row Community Centre, Forest Row, East Sussex. Cost: £40/£35 concessions.

Contact: John Marriott, 07710 296953 jsmarriott@btinternet.com

Sun 20 May: *The Unfolding: Invoking the Soul's Wisdom and Purpose*

Hamblin Hall, Bosham House, Bosham, W Sussex. Cost £35.

Contact: Carol Duncan, 01243 576634 carolduncan8hl@btinternet.com

Wed 23 May: *The Presence: The Being You Shall Become*

Liss, Hampshire. Cost £10. Booking essential as space is limited.

Contact: Astra Ferro, 01730 893975 astrajuliaferro@gmail.com

Fri-Sun 25-27 May: *Forerunner of the Light: Transforming the Echoes of Atlantis*

Intensive Study Weekend at Hawkwood College, Stroud.

Information & bookings: www.hawkwoodcollege.co.uk info@hawkwoodcollege.co.uk 01453 759034

For further information on all talks/workshops, please see

<https://meader.org/events/category/united-kingdom-and-ireland/>

