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Please email contributions to the Editor at

denumine@gmail.com

following the guidelines on the back page

EDITORIAL

Turmoil and change

In addition to continuing conflict around the world and the ravages of the climate emergency, shocking scenes have been unfolding in Israel and Palestine that can make us despair. In this age of 24-hour news reports we are challenged to stay calm amidst the clamour and suffering. I am finding some solace from a twice weekly online healing group. Prayers for peace and silent witness are things we can all do, wherever we are.

The role of members: reciprocity and renewal?

The Alister Hardy trustees have been exploring ideas on restructuring the activities of the Trust led by the Strategy Group (see article by John Harper in our last issue). As part of these discussions I have been involved in a small group to look at the role of members in the Trust and how we sustain activities in the longer term. Our membership has fallen but we have not actively recruited new members, whether through advertising or other outreach activities, for some years now.

No other secular organisation I know offers a space to explore spiritual experience in the way that the Alister Hardy Trust does. Other similar organisations in the UK tend to focus on science (e.g. the Scientific and Medical Network) or are explicitly faith-based (e.g. the Churches Fellowship for Psychic and Spiritual Studies). How can we make the most of this unique aspect and how do we ensure growth and development in the longer term?

The Alister Hardy Trust Annual General Meeting is on 13th December 2023, at 11am GMT (on Zoom). If you cannot be there, be sure to send your thoughts on what you value about your membership of the AHT to John Harper and the Strategy Group via admin@alisterhardytrust.org.

Working with our ancestors

A fascinating group of articles has come in exploring our theme of *Working with our ancestors*. From discovering a potential saint in the family (Sally Richards) to performing rituals with stones to honour the ancestors (Milagros Lizarraga); from reincarnation along family lines (Ian Fordyce) to channelling and the mediumship of Suzanne Giesemann (Karen Wiggins); and the traditional rituals for healing in the Bosnian mountains (Billie Krstovic) – there is something to interest everyone here. The spiritual experiences of Judith Pidgeon and Billie Krstovic take our theme even further. Thank you all for these wonderful pieces.

As ever, we welcome your contributions to our next issue, whatever theme you choose - see guidelines on the back page.

A library of book reviews

Many thanks to all our book reviewers, who leafed through hundreds of pages to help you to choose what to buy next – whether for yourself or a friend.

David Greenwood

As we go to press I am sad to report the news of David Greenwood's passing. David served faithfully and diligently as Honorary Treasurer for the Alister Hardy Trust for many years. In spite of his final illness he found time to share his tribute to Greg Barker in our obituaries in this issue. We send our condolences to David's widow Juliet and to all the family. We will feature an obituary for David in the next issue in spring 2024.

Rhonda Riachi

ARTICLES

Direct line to the ancestors?

evidential – adjective: noting, pertaining to, serving as, or based on evidence[1]

mediumship – noun: the state or condition of being a spiritualistic medium; the vocation or function of such a medium. The state of being a medium (psychic conduit)[2]

The theme of this edition of De Numine - "Working with our Ancestors"- does of course not necessarily suggest a foray into the realms of mediumship, but neither is it too long a stretch to connect the two.

I am usually more of a book reviewer. However, when I recently watched a recording of an interview from the Ancestral Healing Summit 2021 (organised by the SHIFT Network [3]) with renowned US American medium Suzanne Giesemann, in which she detailed a couple of rare experiences during readings[4], some similarities with elements of Dr Ken Vincent's article on Universalism[5] caught my attention. In context of the theme of this issue of De Numine it seemed to be a good moment to introduce this rather more unusual evidential medium.

Suzanne Giesemann

Suzanne Giesemann is a former Navy Commander who served as commanding officer and aide to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US military[6]: an extremely high-level position in a field of work certainly not associated with mediumship and its attendant so-called "woo-woo". Suzanne herself had no inkling of this dimension of reality at that time. Only after she had retired from her military career, a 20-year tour of duty, and her stepdaughter was killed by a lightning strike, did she begin to embark on a journey of discovery of the possibilities of an afterlife: a journey which would eventually lead to her own calling as a medium and spiritual teacher[7]. She pursued it with all the discipline and exacting inquisitiveness of her former career. Early on she decided that evidence was key in mediumship if a message from a deceased loved one was to be a real help for the bereaved, as it had been for herself. Thus asking for the best possible evidence from spirits, whether of passed-on loved ones or beings of a higher dimension, is one of her most emphasised practises[8]. The resulting, often astounding, evidential stories – or NOEs, "No Other Explanation", as she calls them – can be found in most of her podcasts, interviews, addresses and of course in her books. One of the most compelling to me is Wolf's story, which is detailed in a YouTube video and her book "Wolf's Message" (Giesemann, 2014)[9].

Suzanne so far has authored 13 books, 6 Hemi-Sync recordings and founded the "Awakened Way": a path to living in awareness of our connection to the divine, for which she offers many free tools on her website – from e-books and guided meditations to podcasts and interview recordings as well as excerpts of her classes, recordings of live channelling sessions and recently a free App[10]. This material is constantly being expanded, a wide range of it accessible free of charge. In many cases transcripts of channelling sessions are also available, which provides the chance to study them in more depth. For any researcher in the field of NDEs and afterlife studies Sanaya's message for Dr Kenneth Ring, the eminent NDE specialist, found in the free e-book "Awakening: Messages from beyond the Veil"[11] is fascinating reading.

Suzanne also publishes the "Daily Way Messages", short inspiring texts, which are

channelled every day by a group of spirit guides, now known as "Sanaya", who made contact with her as her mediumistic skills developed and who have contributed to the practical tools Suzanne passes on in her courses on personal mediumship and the development of spiritual awareness. Whether in online courses or live workshops, she enables people with much love and enthusiasm to have their own experiences of the greater reality, ever encouraging them to ask for evidence: signs to further validate these personal encounters. While still working as an evidential medium, she devotes a large amount of time to travelling widely across the world in order to teach or speak at relevant events. It may be too late by now to take part in the weekend workshop she is giving in London from October 14th – 15th this year[12], however she will certainly return to the UK where she also received part of her mediumship training at the Arthur Findlay College, Stansted[13].

In the above mentioned interview, when asked about the possibility of finding healing not only with but also for the spirit of deceased perpetrators of harm, Suzanne spoke of two sets of unusual encounters which she'd had in readings. The first was the spirit of a man who had in life severely abused his daughter (who was Suzanne's sitter, the person a medium does a reading or contact for) as well as committed murder: she perceived him coming in escorted by two Beings of Light, "cocooned" up to the neck and not allowed to speak himself. These Light Beings passed on the message that he was now aware of the pain he had caused. He would remain in a state of being "de-conditioned" from this past life, having to relive it in full awareness, experiencing his actions from the perspective of his victims (a process also known from reports of the life-review during NDEs) - yet always in the company of these loving beings until he would be allowed to re-integrate with his greater soul. Interestingly, Suzanne qualified the term "state", saying that some might call or perceive it as a "place" as well[14]. This, and the presence of the Light Beings with the spirit of this man, reminded me of the examples of several "negative" NDEs which Dr Vincent presented in his article. Their visits to or visions of "hell" were described: a place in which some spirits had to remain to learn their lessons, in the company of Light (or Loving) Beings who would assist them, and from which they would eventually be released[15]. The second encounter Suzanne describes in this very profound interview has similar elements, however this extreme kind of state seems to occur rarely.

Human experiences, specifically concerning the afterlife such as NDEs, shared deathbed visions, reincarnation, communications from the deceased, etc, and the evidence which can be gathered from them had been relegated to the fringes of scientific studies for a long time. The tide has been slowly but surely turning, supported by advances in quantum physics and the worldwide gathering of evidence by adventurous and dedicated researchers[16]. Sincere and committed evidential mediums like Suzanne Giesemann who is also willing to engage with scientists doing research into her field of work, are, in my mind, just the people to advance our understanding of the amazing possibility of a multi-dimensional reality and a chance at connecting to our ancestors in a unique way. The name of Suzanne's spirit guides Sanaya means "One worth knowing" – Spirit/Source certainly is, and so is Suzanne Giesemann and her work.

Karen Wiggins, Berlin, Germany

Karen studied at Lampeter and received her MA in Religious Experience in 2003. (Some readers may recall her from her work in postgraduate administration of TRS, Lampeter.)

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[12] www.suzannegiesemann.com/events (2023/7)

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[14] Ancestral Healing Summit 2021 https://youtube.com/watch?v=kG8CXKD4mD0 (2023/7)

[15] Vincent, K. R. (2023) Universalism: The heart of Christianity, De Numine 74, pp. 16-17

[16] Units like the RERC (Religious Experience Research Centre), the University of Virginia Division of Perceptual Studies, IANDS (International Association for Near Death Studies), IONS (Institute of Noetic Sciences), the AAPS (Academy for the Advancement of Postmaterialist Studies) and many others

Reincarnation along family lines

Could King Charles 3rd be the Reincarnation of King George 3rd?

Reincarnation is a widely held, global belief. It is at the centre of the Hindu and Buddhist faiths; the wheel at the centre of the Indian flag signifies the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth which we are all, individually, a part of. The Inuit and other indigenous North American tribes believe in reincarnation, as did the Ancient Greeks and the Vikings believed it. The Christian New Testament has many passages which suggest reincarnation, not least Jesus' inference that John the Baptist was the reincarnation of the prophet Elijah in Matthew 17:9-13. It is a widely held suspicion that the early Christians did accept reincarnation, but that after a few centuries, the Church Leadership excluded it as too inconvenient.

I am a similar age to King Charles, and a licenced Lay Minister in the Anglican Church, since my retirement. However, I have accepted reincarnation as a fact since early childhood. The trigger for me was a fear of the dark and a dread of enclosed spaces. Fairly normal, you might say, but for me these fears led me into vivid experiences of past life recall, trapped in enclosed, dark spaces, which haunt my dreams to this day.

I spent much of my childhood helping on a nearby farm, and that too triggered memories of pastoral life lived previously. Digging my bare hands into the Yorkshire soil at 'spud picking' time, and driving cows to milking at dusk, readily summoned primordial 'half memories' for me. At school I got good marks for a story about a soldier advancing across 'no-man's-land' hearing an enemy shell screaming towards him, reliving a death that in much later life I recalled in detail with the help of regression hypnotherapy.

As my family developed in adult life, I became aware that some relationships within my extended family were not totally new, that some blood ties undoubtedly transcended generations and lifetimes, and had intertwined repeatedly down the ages. I sensed a pattern in family relationships. I read in the books of Carol Bowman that our children may well be our closest contact with heaven, that most of us have lived before, and had different relationships – or the same parent / child relationship – before.

I began to look at not only my own family, but friend's families also, in terms of family likenesses. I found that it was normally very obvious if you had to make a choice, whether a child was from its mother's bloodline, or its father's. Family similarities of look are often very strong indeed.

This is a major part of my ideas about reincarnation. Why not look again at your own family, and spot if you can, who is out of the bloodline of who? It's not enough to say "she's got Aunty Flo's nose, but Uncle Charlie's hair." Most children, I believe, are either from their father's, or their mother's bloodline. These souls represent the return of a particular person from the antecedents of one of their parents, including not just personality, but physical similarity too. Sometimes even birthmarks which reflect how they died last time!

As family members come and go, I am very fortunate to experience departure dreams and arrival dreams. Close family appear reassuringly to me in my dreams after their death, which may be unusual, but probably because I have always been a believer in such things. These are messages of reassurance that my relative is still existent, happy, and are no longer old and infirm in heaven, but restored to their youthful vigour, and fully alive in spirit. I have also experienced vivid, technicolour dreams of a long dead relative, shortly before the birth of a grandchild. In the literature they are called 'announcing dreams'.

So I have had a truly fortunate life, blessed with a deep understanding of my own – and everybody else's – immortality. It's not only that I do not fear death, it's also that I see a rich timelessness in everybody's lives, which transcends the petty, everyday nature of our lives, and I can see a bigger picture of blessing and growth in each one of us.

To begin at the point where I began as a child; spontaneous past life memories occur for many in early childhood. This is one of the strongest themes in the literature on reincarnation. I am fortunate in having had this experience myself, so from an early age I was aware of my previous lives. Ian Stevenson's research suggests that most children begin to lose (or suppress) these memories by about 6 or 7 years old, as the realities of this life 'drive out' the memories of previous lives.

When I say 'spontaneous', I mean that it's 'just there'. Young children particularly will just suddenly open up about experiences from previous lives: 'I miss my last Mummy, Mummy' is a classic case.

Carol Bowman found, having published her book "Children's Past Lives", in 1997, that she began to receive hundreds of letters and emails from concerned parents from around the world, glad to relate their stories, and relieved that listening to their children's 'bizarre' stories had often been instrumental in lifting sometimes severe symptoms from their children. Following her increased publicity; as TV, radio and lecturing tours began, more and more cases poured in, mostly in the USA, but some from the UK too.

My most effective memory of previous lives in early childhood was being shut into my darkened bedroom as a small child, staring at the chink of light under my bedroom door, saying to myself: "You are safe, in this life." Nightmares of premature burial continue to haunt my dreams to this day – waking up in a coffin six feet down in the ground – crying out "Oh no, not again!" and waking in a cold sweat. I have never had therapy for this, as I feel grateful that it has proved a catalyst in my exploration, and theorising, about the pattern of everybody's immortality.

Let me try to give you some stronger definitions first. By 'immortality' I mean our souls, that part of us which inhabits our physical body during our lifetimes, but is greater than that. Our soul does not wear out over time, or get dementia, or become incapable. Physical death is only the point at which our bodies reach their moment of obsolescence, can no longer function, and must be discarded by our souls. Our souls contain all our character, our ideas, the essence of 'us'. They are immortal, and have continued to develop and mature through many lifetimes.

Central to my belief in reincarnation is my idea that we most often come back within families. I have two children, and now four grandchildren. It has always been very clear to me who is descended from whose bloodline. I also began to compare the family bonds within other families of our acquaintance. I found that it was almost always possible to see clear blood links between a child and one of their parents – never both. I would state categorically that children tend to follow the bloodline of ONE of their parents. Which parent may not be so definite, but the strongest guide is how they look, as the family resemblance is normally striking.

Beyond that, I would suggest that the firstborn child will have the likeness of the mother's family; the second born child will carry the likeness of the father's line. Where more children come along, the third seems again to favour the mother's side of the family.

My theory is belied by the process of DNA, which I fully accept, and indeed have paid good money to have my DNA analysed 'for fun' to see which races are mingled in me. Scientifically we all share 50% of our mother's DNA and 50% of our father's too. Nevertheless I maintain that we are all far more complicated entities than either science or rationalism allow. We are too complicated, and subtle of mind to be put down like that, as the world of science will do. The many facets of our personalities have taken many lives and many centuries to burnish, and have a lot more developing still to do. God has made us wonderfully individual: unique and strange. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart…" (Jeremiah 1:5)

My developing theory of blood ties is supported and advanced by Carol Bowman's second book, "Return from Heaven" (2001). Following on from her more autobiographical first book, "Children's Past Lives" (1997) Carol embarked on lecture tours and TV appearances where she was amazed at the levels of empathy she experienced. Hundreds of concerned parents had heard her

words and, with gasps of realisation, understood that their small children, like hers, could remember previous lives with nonchalant ease.

Many of the stories in her second book come from children aged between two and six, spontaneously talking about their previous lives in the same family. Alternatively, parents would recognise behaviours as similar to those of a deceased family member, mirroring a relative's unique quirks and personality.

In researching children's past lives, Carol Bowman began to recognise a prevalence of 'family return'. At first most of the 'recovered memories' were from 'some unknown stranger from the remote past'; but increasingly, high proportions of new stories were within families. As she quoted this material at her lectures, she would hear gasps of recognition, as people realised that a child who was "just like great grandpa" – really was! Many more found great comfort in the reassurance that, on their own death, they too might return to be with their loved ones again.

Many parents were initially upset by what they witnessed in their child, as many personal beliefs that 'we pass this way but once' were shaken, and differed from their religious training. Yet by the time they contacted Carol Bowman they had become convinced by their own children, and were eager to share.

Returning to my general theory of reincarnation; to clarify the situation, if a woman had eight children, by eight different men, the odd numbered children (1-3-5-7) would all be from the mother's bloodlines. The even numbered children would each come from the bloodlines of their respective fathers.

You can probably recognise strong bloodline similarities in all your children; probably added to an unspoken affinity, if not an actual preference, between the parent whose bloodline has been followed and their child.

During the 1960s I read in the Daily Mail that Prince Charles, future King of Great Britain, had graduated from Cambridge University with a degree in English History. Particularly praised was his thesis on George the third (1738-1820). It was found to be 'insightful and original'. Yes, I thought, that's because he *was* George the third in a previous life!

Historian's opinions about George the Third have varied over the years, for instance he has been widely blamed for the loss of the American colonies in the War of Independence, but the prevailing opinion now is that he acted as a constitutional monarch – a new idea then – and it was the politicians who made the decisions. I hope King Charles will be flattered by the idea that he *is* the reincarnation of George the Third!

Ian Fordyce

Ancestral rituals in the 21st Century

I could not have been more than five years old. I remember huge mountains and two rows of very old fashioned "ćerpič" (mud) houses painted white with black roofs. I remember the round sheep enclosure and the smell of fresh cow dung. Then as I walked into a dark circular room, I remember seeing an unfamiliar woman with a head scarf and a black traditional Balkan skirt sitting next to her iron pot full of water. She smiled at me and gestured for me to sit down.

As I sat down someone commented that this was going to be fun and that this woman was a relative. Then I recall the sudden sound of hot lead being poured into the water from a large wooden spoon and the small steam cloud which followed it. The woman was speaking about something I did not understand. Someone said that I had been frightened by something in the woods the other day and the woman said she would take it away. She smiled again. Then everything turned red and I felt soft red material covering my face – it was both pleasant and scary. I had no idea what was going on. It lasted only a few moments then someone removed the fabric and I saw several women smiling at me. "Now…you go out of this room and look into the sky and now it will all be ok". And it really was!

I have subsequently discovered that this childhood memory was the ancient ritual of "Saljivanje strave" which my ancestral mothers performed if someone was having nightmares or was scared by something, or felt unwell without any obvious symptom. It was performed to ward off fear, bad spirits and fright that 'got stuck in the body and soul'.

On this particular occasion, I was visiting the village where my father was born (we lived in the city so this was already quite exotic to me even without the mystical ritual) and had apparently been scared by something in the nearby forest the day before while playing in a clearing. No-one saw what it was; I just ran screaming from some bushes and they found nothing there to explain it. I refused to eat that evening and had several nightmares. So the following day they took me to the woman in the village who was an expert in finding the source and removing the consequences of this event - the woman who knew how to "saljiva stravu" - or remove the bad spirits. I cannot translate the term as there are no equivalent English words. I can only attempt to explain it as the ritual of taking away the effect of a frightening experience by "reading" the shapes molten lead makes when poured into cold water to identify the source of the trauma (modern psychotherapy take note here!), then telling the "patient" what it was and reassuring him/her that it has been removed.

This ritual was also done for children who were not thriving and were suddenly showing signs of being out of sorts, as it was believed that children were too small to remember what actually disturbed them. Modern Psychology agrees with this statement and goes further to suggest (and on many occasions illustrate) that children choose to forget traumatic experiences as they have no adult strategies to deal with them.

Deep in the Bosnian mountains, where a visit to a doctor meant a three-hour walk through thick forest, having a medicine woman known as a "travarka" (female herbalist, from 'trava' meaning herb) was a must. But in those days she was required to deal with such varied ailments that her knowledge wasn't limited to herbs alone. She only knew what she was taught by those who had gone before her, her suppliers were the forests and mountains, her lessons were dangerous trials and errors and she feared no lawsuits but the law of life. Her mistakes were her own to bear. So, she healed with herbs, fixed broken bones, manipulated inner organs (what is known as "putting the stomach back in place" is still done today!), dealt with injuries, children's illnesses and also worked as a bereavement and marriage guidance counsellor and midwife. The ancient ritual of "saljevanje strave" is well known to Bosnian Serbs in the mountains near Sarajevo. This ritual is (however rarely) still performed today deep in the mountains, usually for children or people who have had a fright of some kind.

Treskavica - the author's ancestral mountain.

This special but distant memory was triggered the other day by a visit to an entirely different medical practitioner – an Osteopath – which was prompted by quite a bad pain in my ribs. The pain was bringing me down and I was not feeling up for anything (including writing, which is rare), so I went to a Cranial Osteopath. After a few minutes of treating me, she spoke at length about stress and the deep emotions she was unlocking from my bones.

Eventually I realised she knew pretty much everything about me and my recent life experiences just by examining and working on my body. While this did not surprise me, it made me think about the issues for the first time in a different light and somehow this reminded me of that healing ritual from my childhood. Seemingly unconnected, the two procedures had similarities. On both occasions I was the "patient", yet apparently unaware of what was causing my physical or emotional complaints; on both occasions a healer identified the cause of my symptoms by actions other than just talking to me, and in doing so, released the cause and dispelled the symptoms.

I consider the coincidence a fortunate one. Here I am in the 21st century with a Cranial Osteopath who had to train for many years to learn to "know" her patients through her knowledge of the skeleton and all the mysteries of energy flow through it. It is fortunate because somehow ancient, ancestral knowledge has survived and exists today in a different form, having reinvented itself to be applicable in the modern era. It is fortunate that we are still able to treat ourselves to a bit of magic in a world in which science relies on flesh and bones to prove our existence.

Just when I thought ancestral healing mysteries were no longer accessible to ordinary people, I realised I was wrong. We still have access to it – we just need to know where to look for it other than in a box of pills. I realise an osteopath is not a "medicine woman" but a serious medical practitioner, whatever this means. I also realise Osteopathy is just one branch of a huge tree of healing arts that survived and evolved over time. Osteopathy, acupuncture, herbalism, bioenergy, reflexology – they all have an ancient source and overlap with the many mystical skills our ancestors knew and used daily.

I decided to have a chat about this with one of my friends and was astounded by her response. She pointed out that the whole ritual of 'saljivanje strave' sounded dangerous. Considering the lead and steam from the water, this was bound to be a bad idea. I presume it might be if you didn't know what you were doing and I presume ancestral mothers knew exactly what to do. But what really surprised me was her utter fear of it all and her moral superiority. She felt that this was 'not Christian' and that whatever our ancestors did of this kind should never be mentioned as if it were shameful.

Our identity cannot be cut out of its whole where it suits politics, religion or 'morals' (I'm not sure how morals come into this). The past is past and it cannot be changed just because different people have different likes or dislikes of it. The records of things in the past are just records and inevitably part of who we are today. Our ancestors invested everything they had in us including the magical world they inhabited. Magical it was for them and very real, just as rigid material reality is now for many of us. There is nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, our lives today are a living testimony of their success and their brilliance. Sadly, in those days and those lands women died in childbirth, children had incurable fevers and people were at the mercy of Nature. Like it or not, such rituals had their place. The Church, politics or peoples 'morals' cannot wipe it out of our history. Some people might find history and their ancestors frightening, so I am sure our descendants will find our ways frightening in centuries to come.

Billie Krstovic

From Stanley Spencer's *Resurrection* to John Coltrane's ascension

The new religious movements are labyrinthine in their sheer multiplicity. Andrew Rawlinson's four- fold typology of the spiritual paths provides us with some flexible coordinates. The four categories are: Hot Structured and Hot Unstructured/Cool Structured and Cool Unstructured.[1]

Here they are in a thumb-nail sketch:

Hot Structured:

The path of the shaman, magician and the alchemist: Liberation is obtained by initiation and self-transformation.
Key word: JUMP.

Hot Unstructured:

The path of the devotee, the lover, the martyr: There is no teaching. Only love and total surrender to God brings liberation.
Key word: SUBMIT.

Cool Structured:

The path of the yogi, monk or craftsman: Liberation is within oneself and must be uncovered by disciplined practice. Progress is in incremental steps, not by way of surrender or transformation.
Key word: WORK.

Cool Unstructured:

The path of the sage or hermit: There is no teaching and no path. Your true nature is liberation and you have only to awaken to this self- evident fact.
Key word: LET GO.

Resurrection

My family moved to the Berkshire village of Cookham in 1951, when I was four years old, and we remained there until 1967. Cookham was the home of one of the greatest British painters of the last century, Sir Stanley Spencer (1891-1959). The Church where I once worshipped and later served at Communion is the setting for his monumental painting of the Resurrection, which now hangs in the Tate. The dead rise out of their graves in the churchyard, Christ sits in the porch holding three infants with God the Father standing behind him. Stanley appears in the picture naked, leaning against a gravestone.

Cookham was his earthly paradise and his major works are highly idiosyncratic theophanic visions. The paintings often depict events from the Bible taking place in the village. Christ is crucified at the bottom of the High Street or preaches to the multitude at the local regatta. These works have a timeless quality – not a static eternity but a dynamic one teeming with living forms. This is a Hot Structured universe which Rawlinson describes as "vast and inhabited by a hierarchy of beings". Here salvation is not withheld from the wicked. Indeed, Stanley would have wholeheartedly agreed with Origen that even the Devil will be redeemed at the end of time.

The forces of secularisation from the late 50s onwards were relentless and the Church could provide no effective defence against them. Matters were not helped when I was sent to a rather Dickensian boarding school at the age of 15. Being marched to Church every Sunday was not conducive to piety and I was soon overwhelmed by the militant atheism of my peers. Deep down in my adolescent psyche I was undergoing a crisis of faith. But I was not thrown to the lions for long and a lifeline came from an unexpected source.

The turning point came in 1965 when I discovered John Coltrane's famous album, *A Love Supreme*. The liner notes he wrote had no precedent in the history of jazz:

> *All Praise Be To God To Whom All Praise Is Due.*
>
> *Let us pursue him in the righteous path. Yes, it is true "Seek and ye shall find". Only through Him can we know the wondrous bequeathal. During the year 1957, I experienced by the Grace of God, a spiritual awakening which led me to a richer, fuller, and more productive life. At the same time I humbly asked to be given*

the privilege to make others happy through music. I feel this has been granted through his Grace. ALL PRAISE TO GOD.

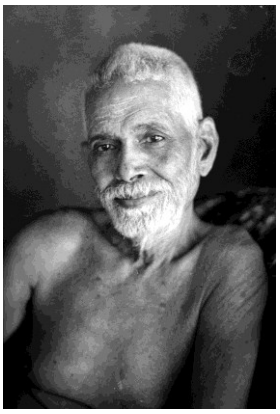
Coltrane's awakening had delivered him from heroin addiction and spared him the fate that befell Charlie Parker. While his shamanic vocation and relentless experimentalism was typically Hot Structured, his religious attitude was Hot Unstructured. Such an attitude is informed by faith in "a divine power, quite other than oneself, which encloses us and is the source of liberation."[2] Whereas the Hot Structured path is self-reliant, Hot Unstructured spirituality is totally dependent on divine grace:

Hot Unstructured traditions share this characteristic: we are always failing. But the solution to this failure… is simply to ask. The reason why asking is the solution, is that love is freely given to all who request it.[3]

On the later Meditations suite Coltrane added Rashied Ali as second drummer and Pharoah Sanders as second tenor sax to his Quartet (impulse 1965). The liner notes suggested that the suite was a sequel to *A Love Supreme*. This lulled me into a false sense of security. On the opening track, titled "To the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," the saxophones speak in tongues. Coltrane takes the first tenor solo over a tumultuous enhanced rhythm section. He alternates rapidly between the highest and lowest notes on his horn like a one-man call and response. Pharoah Sanders follows with a sonic flight that unveils the primordial forms of the world. Or rather Pharoah is playing in the midst of these forms, which the ancient Greek philosophers called the archai, the primary substances that never change, or the apeiron, the Boundless.[4]

Ascension

Early in 1966 Laurence, the friend who was initiating me into this extraordinary music, handed me a book on Sri Ramana Maharshi, the greatest master of the Cool Unstructured path. The book was titled *In Days of Great Peace* and was written by a European who stayed at the Ashram in Ramana Maharshi's last years.[5] It consisted of a diary of the author's inner experiences during Sri Maharshi's darshans. He told me it was very important that I read it without delay.



Sri Ramana Maharshi.
Portrait by G.G. Welling (1948)

Two weeks later I reluctantly began to read this book in bed. I looked at the iconic Welling portrait of Sri Ramana on the frontispiece and ploughed through about 30 pages of the text. Then I came to a chapter titled Tears. Once, when Mouni Sadhu was sitting at the master's feet, he found that he had tears rolling down his cheeks. But he felt neither sadness nor distress for these were tears of purification. Sri Ramana also saw what was happening and evidently knew what it meant. As I was reading this passage an inner voice told me that I had once sat at the Maharshi's feet and experienced the same tears. This apparent recollection from a former life released a rapid surge of energy up my spine. My normal consciousness was momentarily eclipsed. I saw a hierarchy of spirits rise above me like plateaus. As I was about to step onto the plateaus but I was pulled back abruptly. I was momentarily entangled in "the insane contradiction… between existence beyond Maya in the cosmic Self and that amiable human weakness which fruitfully sinks many roots in to dark earth"[6]. As I doubled-up I felt a spirit pass over my body. Rightly or wrongly, I was convinced I would have died if I had not fallen back at the last moment.

Despite this abortive ascension I was not the same person as I was before I began to read *In Days of Great Peace*. Naturally my parents noticed nothing at the breakfast table the following morning—not that I could have given a

coherent account of what had happened to anyone. I certainly could not have turned to anyone in the Church. The doors were now firmly closed and have remained so. But neither could I have gone to India to repeat my "former life." I have found no evidence that I had actually sat at the Maharshi's feet in an earlier incarnation. But I had undoubtedly experienced an encounter with the archetype of the holy man or the mana personality. Jung described this figure as "a dominant of the collective unconscious, the well-known archetype of the mighty man in the form of hero, chief, magician, medicine man, saint, ruler of men and spirits, the friend of God".[7]

Sri Ramana Maharshi's charisma made a tremendous impression on me but his insistence that the world was Maya contradicted the Judaeo-Christian cosmogony, and his uncompromising denial of the subject-object relation undermined the I -Thou relationship. I found this deeply unsettling.

John Coltrane died in July 1967 at the age of 40. His loss was incalculable, for without his music, I would have had no imaginal context for the sudden theophany of the previous year. A few weeks after receiving the news I was dining with Laurence at his parents' home. After the meal we both sensed a presence in the room, an energy field that formed momentarily but did not condense. Earlier in that year Coltrane had cancelled his long overdue visit to this country, much to our disappointment. Had he now made good the omission?

Who am I?

According to the Ramana Maharshi all thoughts that arise in the mind proceed from just one thought, namely "I am." The process of Self Enquiry (Atma Vichara) involves tracing each thought back to this root thought. Eventually the wheel slows down and you take the final step: you see that even the "I" thought is a fiction. Then you are delivered from the illusion of a separate identity and become the Self that you always were.

Rudolf Steiner, who adhered to the Western esoteric tradition, based his entire philosophy on the primacy of consciousness and the "I." In an essay on Anthroposophy and Depth Psychology, Hans Lauer shows how penetrating deeply into the "I" can have a very different outcome:

> Consciousness expands to such an extent that it enables one to see directly what lies behind the world's thoughts, the archetypes, what brings them into being. What is this experience? To the modern person it sounds unbelievable and fantastic, yet it is a real experience. One sees differentiated spiritual beings who appear in hierarchical order. We can also call them divine beings, for they are the ones of whom the Christian esoteric tradition speaks of as the hierarchy of angels, archangels, archai, Powers, Thrones, and so on.[8]

This is exactly what happened to me when I read In Days of Great Peace. My "past life" recall must have activated a dormant "I" thought and simultaneously unveiled the hierarchy of spirits. For many years after the event I could not understand how such a thing could be possible. There is no place for any such hierarchy in the Cool Unstructured discourse of Sri Ramana; Self Enquiry simply bypasses all intermediate levels of being. There is also no angelology in Anglican Christianity for very different reasons. It was only when I came across Steiner's Hot Structured appropriation of the "I" thought that the problem, which had vexed me for decades, was resolved.

For many years the epiphanies that took place when I was serving at Communion in Cookham Church, Spencer's visionary paintings, Coltrane's visionary music, the spontaneous activation of the "I" thought and the of the hierarchy of spirits were just so many disparate fragments. Had I not found my way to Jungian analysis in 1974 things would have remained like this. According to Jung, there are two aspects to the alchemical opus: the experimental procedures and the theoria. The latter plays the same role in alchemy as dogma does in theology. Theoria is the quintessence of the symbolism of the unconscious "just as dogmas are a condensation or distillation of sacred history, of the myth of the divine being and his deeds."[9] An alchemist's theoria is his Ariadne's thread without which he would become lost in the labyrinth of the opus

When Jung went to India in 1938, he had not yet developed a theoria to serve as a basis for a dialogue with Sri Ramana. He probably made the right decision not to visit the Ashram. When Sri Ramana visited me in 1966, the only theoria I had available to me was a rudimentary idea of numinous experience. This may well have saved my sanity at the time. Jung's model of alchemical individuation has provided me with a model of psycho-spiritual development that does not entail such a drastic relativization of the ego as Self-Enquiry.

Frederick Burniston

Frederick is an independent Jung scholar. This essay was previously published in two Jungian journals, Psychological Perspectives, Los Angeles 2011 and Harvest, London 2012, and finally as Chapter 10 of his book The Cunning Secret of the Wise (Xlibris 2023).

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Lineage: working with stones, despachos, and the four elements

I have been interested in knowing about my ancestors and their stories since my early childhood. My grandma and my aunt from my maternal side used to tell me about them and I kept track of their stories. My dad did not have much detailed information about his ancestors. When I started walking the Andean Cosmovision path I heard about doing lineage work, an idea which I found fascinating due to my early interest in my ancestry.

From my maternal side the information stopped in Ecuador; from where Santos, my great, great grandmother, escaped with her son and her daughter Sara, my great grandmother. Santos and her two children crossed the border from Ecuador to Peru. It was a difficult trip and her son, who was only a baby, died on the voyage. Santos and Sara settled in Piura, Peru.

Santos was running away from a Catholic priest, who was the father of her two children, as he planned to send them to Spain where he had family, separating them from their mother. Sara, my great-grandmother, had loving early childhood memories of her father, the priest, whom she never saw again. It was later on in her life, when she was an adult, that she received news about her father's passing and learned that he had been looking for her.

I was able to trace the priest in Ecuador to a town close to the border from Piura where they had all lived and I decided to go and do an offering to lighten the hucha and to reunite him with his lineage through my grandmother - the priest's granddaughter - Graciela's descendents. Graciela had already passed away. She had 2 daughters, Fanny (my mother) and Sara (named after the priest's daughter).

Stones carry information; instinctively I have brought stones in the past from one Apu to another as an offering or placed them in a despacho inside the earth. I decided to do my lineage work by offering a despacho to the Pachamama, using stones to integrate my great great grandfather's lineage information with him, and in his land. I brought stones from my home in Simi Valley, California where I live with my sons; from my sister's home in San Fernando Valley, where she lived with her daughter and son; from

my mother's home in Lima, where she lived with my other sister and my dad; and from my aunt Sara's home in Piura where she lived with her daughter and grand-daughter.

Vilcabamba was a high energy place, which was not well known by any group or teacher I had encountered in the past; it was an isolated Ecuadorian town and known to be a “fountain of longevity”. Surrounded by mountains, with clean air and picturesque shops and houses, it hosted several famous people, including a former US astronaut who settled there searching for longevity. It may have been the reason why my great-great-grandfather ended his days there, I thought.

My despacho took place close to the priest's last home, in the backyard of the house of one of his relatives who had transformed it into a hotel where I stayed. It was at dawn under the New Moon, next to a Centennial Huilco tree, with the majestic Apu Mandango rising tall on the left and the town of Vilcabamba below.

Mandango - Vilcabamba

I made a burial despacho. The four stones were the main element, and I placed lots of sweets, sugar and loving intentions in it to clean the bitterness of the separation between the father and his children, as well as the mother and the children from their birthplace and all their relatives. I also smoked a handmade tobacco cigarette from my great-great-grandfather’s house in Vilcabamba, brought to me by our common relative as well.

The following day I went with the great-great-great-nephew of my great-great-grandfather for a walk to the Apu Mandango. We were climbing the beautiful mountain road under a deep blue sky with solid white clouds, Vilcabamba town looked far away, when he saw a dog which looked familiar to him. He called her name, “Pitusha,” and the dog came running to him wagging its tail. He was delighted and amazed; it was his young female dog which he had lost months ago and had been looking all over the town for! I knew that the reunification of Pitusha with her "dad" was a sign that the reunification of the priest with his lineage had been successful and that the Hucha (heavy energy) had become Sami (light energy).

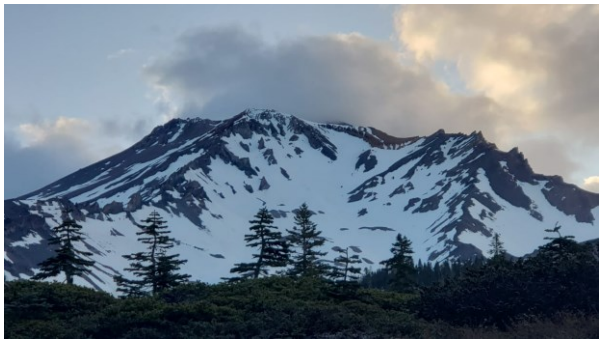
Back in the US I went to Apu Shasta to finish my maternal lineage work with a despacho in my home place. I made the despacho inside the earth; placing pictures of my mother’s lineage, including one of the priests, a stone from apu Mandango, and the usual despacho elements with lots of sweets.

On my trip to Lima, Peru in May 2023 my dad and my mom, who were suffering from the struggles and sickness of old age, ended up hospitalized at the same time and I stayed with them at the hospital until they got better and were sent back home. During my stay at the hospital I realized that my dad understood everything that was going on around him, despite the fact that he was not able to speak or respond in regular ways due to a stroke he had had in 2020 that was worsening his awareness of time.

I felt very sad that my dad was aware of his condition, which I knew would be devastating for such a strong and capable man. Back in the US I went on Father’s day to Apu Shasta to make four despachos, one on each element: Earth, Fire, Wind and Water, to honour my father and to help him during his transition.

Even though it was already June, Mount Shasta was still covered in snow, so I couldn't reach the highest area. I made my way through the snow which I have always loved. I have fond memories with my dad in the snow at Bariloche when I was a child. I was grateful for it; I even walked barefoot for a while enjoying it as a child, until I found an area that had pieces of dirt surrounded by white snow and had a view of Shasta's Bunny Flat’s Peak in front. Without planning it I picked a spot in the same area where I had made my maternal lineage despacho years ago.

As it was a Father's day despacho I decided to work with patriarchal energy. I asked permission from the apu to do my work there, took my pututo (a giant shell brought from Peru, like the ones the Incas and Native Americans use to summon the energies) blew in it to summon the Apus and energies, and I proceeded with the despacho inside Mother Earth. I used the usual ingredients, with lots of sweets and with beautiful flowers, but with an emphasis on male energy as well. I had brought a little of my father's blood (in a piece of cotton from the hospital that I kept). I placed the cotton with my father's blood at the center, as the main piece of the despacho. I placed on top one string of lion's hair I got several years ago from a zoo (the lion is my power animal inherited from my dad's strong spirit). I also placed a shell formation from Kauai's Island, where the souls depart from mother Earth (which the Dalai Lama teaches, I have read). I had been on Kauai 2 months before, and had left a stone from my parents' home in Lima, another from Apu Shasta and another from Apu Ausangate in the sea there. (I had spoken to my father about Kauai in May and got a strong physical reaction from him). I also poured into the despacho water from Apu Ausangate's stream and Potomac River and added some snow from Apu Shasta. I began the despacho with chicha de jora and ended it with Anis del Mono, a delight for the male Apus and for my father as well.



Mount Shasta

It was still daylight when I finished my despacho and before exiting the mountain area I found lying on the ground a miniature white stone hand-made pututo. My ancestors, the Apus and patriarch energies had responded with this beautiful sign, I felt. A starry and freezing summer night had unfolded and had caught me without enough preparation for such low temperatures at Mount Shasta. The campfire comforted me, and I presented to "abuelito fuego'' the offering of my second despacho for José, my father, and his lineage.

The pututo

Around 3am I went to my car, turned on the heater and enjoyed the spectacle of the universe above Shasta. When Apu Shasta became more visible I noticed on its top a dark shape on the snow like two human silhouettes walking towards the top with the shapes of two big birds above them. I felt that they were my parents' silhouettes in the process of leaving their human condition and transitioning into spiritual beings represented by the shapes of two condors or eagles. I took this as a message from the apu, which gave me peace.

The following morning I made a small despacho as my offering to the wind with a kintu made with 3 Laurel leaves, placed small flowers on top of it, and let it go from a cliff on Shasta with my intentions to honour my father's stage and his transition to come. I ended my patriarchal offerings with a despacho in the waters of the Sacramento River bank which originates from Mount Shasta, I placed a kintu of Laurel leaves, flowers, sugar and Peruvian sweet red wine over a tree bark and let it flow on the river as an offering to the ñustas and the great Sacramento River.

After doing this last despacho in the waters of the Sacramento River I instinctively did something new to me. I poured water from the Potomac River and from Apu Ausangate's stream into the Sacramento River's flow, uniting the three waters and letting them move along Pachamama's course while ringing my bells which

had patriarchal symbols: Jesus Christ from Lima, Taita Inti from Cusco, Washington monuments from DC, and Ganesha from Kauai.

Sacramento River, with bells and bottles of water from the Potomac and Ausangate

I felt very strongly the energy of my father. Potomac is Washington DC's river in front of all the monuments and memorials, Apus Shasta and Ausangate, are the tutelary Apus of my adoptive homeland, California, and of my ancestors' homeland Cusco, the Inca's land. My lineage offerings from the maternal and paternal sides had been concluded.

The following 4th July I experienced a stronger love for the US. I felt that Pachamama was doing its work inside me and that this was a consequence of my latest lineage work on the patriarchal side. I have lived in the US most of my life since 1990 but it wasn't until 4th July 2023 that I felt truly patriotic for the US as well as for Peru.

"Patriotism: The root of this word, in turn, means "fatherland." Paternal, patriarchy, and even English's own father are related. Lineage is the core of it." (Wikipedia). Maybe that is the reason why I felt very patriotic about Peru, but not the US until that day. I felt my lineage in this country and belonging to this land where my sons were born. I had become a US citizen long ago and this land now had my father's and mother's lineage offerings in it.

My father passed away on July 31st 2023, 1 hour and 15 minutes after I arrived at his bedside at the same hospital in Lima where I stayed with him and my mother in May. Two days after my father's funeral I went to a stone beach in Lima and found a heart-shaped stone with a dark silhouette that looks just like one of the Apu Shasta's silhouettes I saw after having made my despacho on father's day.

Kissing my dad's cold forehead before his burial and seeing his snow-like hair I understood, in my own cosmovision, the ancient indigenous tradition by which important people who pass away are transformed in Apus to the collective mind. I saw my strong father, the patriarch of my family, as if transformed into a beautiful tutelary snowy mountain, and he became my personal Apu.

Milagros Lizarraga

Glossary

Apu *- Mountain spirit, a living nature being*

Despacho *- 'offering by hand', an Andean offering to Apus, usually containing leaves, sugar and flowers*

Kintu *- part of the offering in a despacho*

Pachamama *- The whole of creation and the feminine creative energy that permeates it*

Ñustas *- living female spirits in nature, similar to elementals*

Sami *- light energy*

Hucha *- heavy energy*

Pututo *– small ceremonial trumpet*

Chicha de jora *- corn beer*

Anis del Mono *- aniseed distilled drink*

Abuelito fuego *- Grandfather fire, the spiritual element of fire*

A saint in the family?

Cornwall is a compelling and mysterious land, a place of myths, saints and legends. In spring 2021 we rented a cottage near Dodman Point, the highest headland on the South Cornwall coast. This area south of St Austell was new to us and we spent a delightful week walking the coastal paths and exploring the nearby villages of Gorran Haven, Gorran Churchtown and Mevagissey. I felt drawn to the area and hoped to visit again.

For many years I had been interested in my family history. My mother often spoke about her mother, Eva, who died before I was born, and about Eva's mother, Sarah Jane Smith (known as Sally), after whom I was named. My mother's life and our relationship were troubled - she had severe bipolar disorder. I perhaps longed for the maternal relationship she had had and that Eva had with Sarah Jane. I wanted to know more about these significant women and I had many questions. There was also an intriguing mystery about my great grandmother. Who was Sarah Jane's father?

Sarah Jane was born in Coleshill, North Warwickshire in September 1855 to a single woman Anne Smith. Anne was a laundress and the daughter of a 'post-boy'. Coleshill was an important staging post on the coaching roads from London to Holyhead and the north-west, though by 1855 the development of the railways meant its heyday had passed. So Sarah Jane's father might be a local man, perhaps Anne's neighbour or employer, or someone just travelling through Coleshill. The possibilities were endless and, unless legal evidence such as a will or an affiliation order emerged, there seemed to be no way of identifying him. At least not until the introduction of DNA testing for family history purposes provided a new way of tackling the problem.

In late 2017, encouraged by a chance meeting with an American genealogist who had successfully used DNA testing to find answers to previously insoluble questions, I completed an Ancestry DNA test. I had no experience of working with DNA evidence and no idea how easy or difficult it would be. By 2021 I had honed my skills and had a tree that was now rooted in DNA evidence but the question of Sarah Jane's paternity remained a mystery. This was despite help from five cousins, all great-grandchildren of Sarah Jane, who had generously agreed to have a DNA test and to give me access to their results. One of these cousins is an experienced family historian and an unfailing source of help and advice.

Along the way I had followed several fruitless leads and one that seemed promising. I had noticed that we cousins all had DNA matches with people in Canada and the United States who were descended from a Frank Olver and Eliza Ruse who married in Pinner, Middlesex in 1852. The marriage certificate described Frank as a carpenter residing in Pinner and Eliza's place of residence as Aston near Birmingham. Aston is not far from Coleshill and Anne Smith lived there after she eventually married. Perhaps Sarah Jane's father was a relative of Eliza Ruse? Eliza had family in Aston throughout the 1850s. But, despite thorough searching, I found no evidence of DNA links between any of us and any descendants of Eliza's birth family. Assuming that any connection must be through Eliza, I looked no further.

Sometime later, after our stay in South Cornwall, I returned to our growing list of DNA matches with descendants of Frank and Eliza. DNA matches are measured in centimorgans (cms) and I noticed that two of the matches exceeded 100cms and others were more than 50cms. It was, therefore, very likely that these people were related to us as third cousins or a similar degree. Crucially, there was no evidence that we were related through any ancestral line shared by my cousins.

This time I investigated Frank Olver's ancestry. I found that he was a Cornishman, baptised in St Austell in 1828. His parents, Zacharias and Matilda, were born in Mevagissey and, at the time of the 1841 and 1851 censuses, they were living with their family in Gorran Churchtown. By 1861 the whole family, including Frank and his wife Eliza, had emigrated to Canada. Exploring the DNA evidence in conjunction with the Olver

family tree, I found that my cousins and I had matches not only with the descendants of Frank and Eliza but also with descendants of Frank's siblings, his aunts and uncles and from descendants of his more distant forebears. Frank had two younger brothers but there was no evidence they had any Warwickshire connections.

The next year brought another surprising discovery as I looked more closely at Frank Olver's ancestry. He was descended on both sides from long established seafaring families in Mevagissey, the Dunns, Hunkins and Allens. His father's family, the Olvers, had also been in Mevagissey for generations. However, the origins of Frank's maternal grandfather were puzzling.

Andrew Elvins was a blacksmith who married Elizabeth Hunkin Dunn in Mevagissey in 1791. The marriage record describes Andrew as 'a sojourner', an imprecise term which implies that he had been resident in Mevagissey only a short time. It has been difficult to trace Andrew's origins with any certainty. He may have been born in Mevagissey but it is more likely that he was born in St Stephen in Brannel, a large parish to the west of St Austell, or possibly St Breock in north Cornwall. The spelling of Elvins is variable, as in the record of Andrew's marriage where he is recorded as Andrew Elvins but signed himself 'Elvans'.

I had recently joined the Cornwall Family History Society and was contacted 'out of the blue' by a member who had Elvins forebears from Mevagissey. She sent me documents from the Society and from Kresen Kernow (the Cornwall Archives) containing an intriguing account of the family's origins in Cornwall. From at least the thirteenth century the family were hereditary guardians of the shrine chapel of St Elvan, situated within the parish of Sithney just north of Porthleven. After the shrine was closed during the reformation of the sixteenth century, the family moved elsewhere in Cornwall and in about 1750 a branch settled in Mevagissey. The family name, Elvans, came from the Latin name of the saint, St Elvanus, but by the eighteenth century was more usually the anglicised 'Elvins'.

Little is known about St Elvan (also spelt Elwyn, Elven, or Elvin) and even his identity is uncertain. Elwen was mentioned in a medieval life of St Breage, noted by John Leland, as one of seven saints who arrived in Cornwall from Ireland in the fifth century. The chapel at Sithney is recorded from at least 1270 and is traditionally believed to be where St Elvan was buried. But it is unclear whether the St Elvan commemorated there was St Elwyn from Ireland, a local man, or even one of two Breton saints St Elouain and St Elven[1].

On our next visit to Cornwall we went to investigate the traditional site of the chapel. It was situated almost opposite a farm 'St Elvans' but otherwise away from habitation. It was built on a large round Iron Age mound which has a public footpath running right through the centre. The entire site was covered in ivy and brambles but the stone steps up to it at both entrances and the solid perimeter walls were still clearly visible beneath the undergrowth.

Steps to the former shrine to St Elvan

We wondered if the ancient stone gate posts at the entrance to the field opposite the shrine may have marked the entry to the shrine complex. We mused about what exactly was involved in the role of hereditary shrine keeper. How did the sixteenth century Elvans feel about the destruction of the shrine? Did it represent the breakdown of their whole way of life including their spiritual life? Or did they see it as an opportunity to start a new life? We will never know, but certainly hereditary shrine keeper is a new and interesting addition to the list of occupations in my family tree.

For me 2021-2022 was a time of unexpected revelation. I had not only discovered a part of Cornwall that I felt unaccountably drawn to, but very soon found ancestral roots there and the answer to a previously insoluble life-long mystery. I had also unearthed a mysterious family saint!

Sally Richards

[1] Orme, N. The Saints of Cornwall p.112, Oxford, Oxford University Press (2000).

The gate post

EXPERIENCES

Evidence of things unseen

After my mother's beloved dog Cassie had died, I took my own dog for a walk in the woodland pet cemetery to Cassie's graveside. My own dog was beside himself with joy, clearly seeing or sensing Cassie's presence as he sat by her grave. I myself saw and photographed a cube of glorious golden light hovering above the area. Much later the photograph was blank; but I had seen all the reassurance I needed to dare to tell others that death is not the end.

One night some time later my mother placed her hands across her chest, ready to die. She was met, she said, by two dark angels who told her, "You must go back. It isn't your time. You still have work to do."

Her 'work' was, I believe, to inspire me further in my work on the continuity of consciousness that was already my passion and also in my studies in the University of Wales Lampeter 'Death and Immortality' MA programme. I only discovered this course when a book by the deceased Frances Banks channelled by Helen Greaves (Testimony of Light) spontaneously fell open at the page where the course was being recommended. Incidentally, my mother had no interest or belief in 'life after death'.

Several years later, as my mother was dying, I saw a plume of glittering gold leave her body and rise upwards, and felt such joy at her parting despite our closeness as mother and daughter. She also saw an accompanying light around me and a huge figure whenever I came to care for her.

My father, also a non-believer, was able to tell me "They have been working on me all night," of the doctors at the hospital to which he had been admitted. There was no way he could have known this, as we were told he had been unconscious throughout. He died the following day.

When I was keeping vigil for my aunt at her hospital bed, she suddenly roused from her comatose state, sat up, clapped her hands, holding them out - I assume to her dead husband (a renowned healer) and her son - with eyes full of adoration, her manner full of joy and excitement. She died soon after, in peace.

Others recounted similar experiences to me, in my former drop-in centre in Dorset called 'Safe Journey Home'. I felt so very privileged to hear their experiences.

Judith Pidgeon

Judith is a founder of The Martinsey Isle Trust and of Transitus, dedicated to looking at the continuity of consciousness, before, during and after life.

Remembrance day

I am a school teacher. I was not born in this country. History is the same everywhere I should hope, however the customs for marking it are not the same wherever you go.

It was the week of Remembrance in November and I was at work. At 10.50am we all made our way to the school field to remember those who died in WWI and WWII. My husband's grandad was at Dunkirk and although very sick, he still survived. I thought about that as I was walking behind a long line of school children. I thought how we must speak to our daughter about it in the evening. This somehow helped me feel less out of place, as I sometimes still feel in the UK. My heritage is different and in situations like this I feel almost uninvited, an intruder.

We all stood in silence. Numerous snakes of quiet children and their teachers stood motionless. 1,700 of us. Silent. The voice of the History teacher delivering his speech had never reached such a radius. Never had it been so quiet on the school grounds. The skies were grey but dry. As I stood ahead of my class in a line of teachers I was very cold. Shivering, I closed my jacket and hugged myself with its ends. As I did that I looked around and then up. It started to rain. I could see strangely glowing drops. I waited for the cold and wet of rain. It never came. The earth was dry and so was my jacket. I looked up again and the whole sky was covered with droplets.

Minutes passed and still not a drop of rain on my hand. I was getting very confused. This time I really looked up. I really looked. Astonished. In disbelief. Mesmerised!

The whole sky was covered with glowing lights. I rubbed my eyes. The lights were still there. I looked down thinking something was wrong with me. I could see nothing unusual anywhere but in the sky. The sound of marching cadets kept me present in the ceremony. An entirely different ceremony was happening in the sky. I just kept watching the lights. They were almost liquid lights, glowing in their millions all over the cloudy skies. They were moving downwards but never fell. I suddenly felt an enormous sense of love and sadness all at once. I knew at that moment that these were souls. I knew they gathered for this simple, modest ceremony, for the silence of the young. As if remembering them had called them to this field.

I felt enormous respect. I felt elevated by their presence. I knew these were the souls of soldiers. At this point I had no doubt what I was witnessing. In these lights there was love and the resolve to protect this land and its people. I felt honoured that I was allowed to see it. I felt very small in this presence. I was in awe. I wondered whether anyone else knew they were there. I looked around, everyone was looking down. The sound of a single instrument playing sadly prevailed in the scene. I just stood there watching, soaking in this experience, letting it happen.

The ceremony finished abruptly. I was woken from this by moving bodies. I walked slowly behind some chatting children towards my classroom. I kept looking up. They were still there. Then the sky was fading. Then it was empty. I looked up just before I walked into the building. There was nothing to see. Just the dark grey clouds now. They were gone. Until next year, I thought.

I sat in my classroom thinking how important the honouring of ancestors really is. I thought about the irrelevance of time and space in ancestral communication. I thought how amazing it is that they are actually there. Not lost to us, but still here and now. All we have to do is to call and welcome them!

Billie Krstovic

BOOK REVIEWS

Irving Finkel, The First Ghosts: Most Ancient of Legacies. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2021. 344 pp. ISBN: 9781529303261. £25.00

Irving Finkel, Senior Assistant Keeper of Ancient Mesopotamian script, languages and cultures in the Middle East Department of the British Museum, has here assembled a detailed study of ghosts (and some spirits) from the approximately 130,000 cuneiform tablets that the museum currently holds. In fact, as I read it I realised that I was actually watching ghosts rise before my own eyes: the ghosts of apparently long-dead Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian beliefs about denizens of other worlds, brought forth by Finkel's deft analysis and given new life thanks to his effortless prose.

Until I read this book I hadn't realised how prevalent belief in ghosts had been in the Mesopotamian cultures of millennia past for, as the author shows throughout, these ancient peoples took the existence of denizens of the Netherworld for granted much as we take the existence of dogs and cats for granted in our own world. Not for nothing have those distant cultures been described as 'demon haunted.' The damned things were everywhere; ghosts especially, and many of the omens, spells and incantations examined throughout this study were designed, above all, to seek to *control* them: to send them back down when for whatever reason they came back up, to bring them up if for whatever reason they were needed up here rather than down there, and to make sure they did what was needed - and no more - in their brief sojourns in the land of the living before they were safely tucked up again back down below in the land of the dead. And, as Finkel shows in detail, such ups and downs were no mere metaphors. The dead really did, within these cultures, live *down there*. Hence, keeping ghosts - particularly family ones - 'onside' (or, more correctly, 'downside') meant more often than not burying them under the floor of your house and ministering to them via correct ritual and libation in the ways that many of these Sumerian and Akkadian tablets prescribed.

Whilst the bulk of this book is to do, as the title suggests, with ghosts, there is much more to it than this. In its middle chapters Finkel treats us to a range of what he dubs 'Netherworld Stories' involving the descents of Inanna, Ishtar, Gilgamesh, Enkidu and others. And in the latter stages we are introduced to 'The Delicate Art of Necromancy': how to bring up the dead in such ways that they could be guaranteed to help rather than hinder (or worse) the living. For example: bringing ghosts up might be one thing but hearing them howl or wail meant that you would soon join them. Hence the complexity of necromancy revealed in the tablets the author translates and presents. A successful calling-forth meant, amongst other things: bringing up the (right) ghost, keeping it from wailing (or keeping yourself from hearing it wail), and banishing it back successfully whence it came. Of course, more often than not, the only thing that anybody would want to do with a ghost would be to keep it away from the living as far as possible on any and every conceivable occasion. Hence amulets for, as the author puts it, 'wearing against unknown visitants.' Typical is the following: 'If a person often sees dead people in his dreams you stitch up 'dog's-tongue' and a soiled rag in the hide of a dead cow with a dormouse tendon and put it around his neck.' This attention to detail seems to have been a consistent feature of such 'ghost-science': a right outcome was, above all, only seemingly guaranteed if you *got it right*.

In devoting much time to ghosts, Finkel is careful not to overlook demons too. In fact, by the latter stages of this (perhaps paradoxically) engaging study I felt that I'd come to know these evil personages as something approaching friends. I certainly knew their names: Lamashtu (the Baby-Snatcher), *Ahhazu* (the Grabber), *Shulak* (the Lurker-in-the-Toilet), and *Rabisu* (the Croucher) to name but a few.

In less capable hands this study would have been as dry as the dust that was needed to successfully cast many of the spells that the author painstakingly reassembles throughout. But Finkel shows deft stylistic touches everywhere - particularly in his treatment of the 'Ghost-

Mistress of Endor' within a chapter devoted to the separate but related 'Biblical World' - and even suggests that the reader recite some of his translated incantations aloud. I preferred not to do this, mindful of what might happen if I accidentally summoned something I couldn't successfully put back. This, in itself, shows how captivated I was with the whole thing. And this, for me, was the real triumph of *The First Ghosts*: that the author took the dry clay of long-hidden cultures and made it *live*.

Mark Fox

Mark Fox is an independent writer, speaker and researcher. For more, go to www.markfox.co.uk.

Evelyn Elsaesser, Spontaneous Contact with the Deceased. Winchester: iffBooks, 2023. 332pp

This book is based on a survey conducted by Evelyn Elsaesser, Chris A. Roe, Callum E. Cooper, and David Lorimer. It is a major contribution to research on after-death communication (ADC) and also to evidence for life after death.

ADCs are spontaneous and initiated by the deceased, without intention or solicitation on the part of the experiencer. They are direct and without the use of mediums or other devices such as psychomanteums.

Subjects completed a 2- to 3-hour questionnaire consisting of 194 items in English, French, or Spanish. A total of 1,004 questionnaires were completed. The respondents consisted of 853 women, 144 men, and one "other." Women responding more to questionnaires is fairly common, but research shows that men experience ADCs as often as women. My own experience is that if men know you are interested and accepting of ADCs or other spiritually transformative experiences, they will tell you about them but won't write them down. The age range of the sample was 18 to 89 years, with a mean age of 51 years.

A large number of cases are presented in narrative format, and the evidential cases are mixed with the non-evidential cases. It is important to remember that, while "evidential" ADCs are "gold" to researchers seeking evidence of life after death, both types are meaningful and treasured by the experiencer. I know this because I am one of the cases included in the non-evidential ADC group. The study includes subjects who were awake, asleep, falling asleep, and waking.

One type of evidential ADC is that which occurs before the experiencer was notified by conventional means that their loved one was dead (i.e. phone call, e-mail, or personal visit). These accounted for 21% of the cases. These cases are even stronger for evidence of life after death when the death was not anticipated; this was 44% of cases. The study also includes 4 rare cases, including that of 2 shared death-bed visions and 2 shared death experiences.

A majority of the messages from the deceased include: 1) that they are "alive and well" in the afterlife, 2) messages of love and reassurance, 3) encouraging the loved one to come out of their grief, 4) sometimes the prospect of future re-uniting, and 5) sometimes the dead ask for forgiveness.

Returning to evidential information, 24% of experiencers received previously unknown information and 21% also said others perceived the contact. About 12% were frightened by their ADC, but 32% of that group reported that their fright decreased as their ADC progressed. In spite of this, most of the messages were positive. The study included ADCs from strangers (aka, ghosts) in their sample.

Of the deceased who appeared, 53% were men and 33% were women, 4% children, and 9% "other." Parents, in-laws, and surrogate parents were most often seen, followed by spouses and

sweethearts. Before the ADC, 69% of the experiencers believed in afterlife; after their ADC, 93% believed in afterlife.

Sceptics have often dismissed ADCs as self-generated by the experiencers' grief. Much of the data of this study refutes this. This is especially true of ADCs which happened before the experiencer has been informed by conventional means (such as a phone call) that the person had died. Also, ADCs from a third person in which the experiencer is asked to transmit the information of the ADC to another. We can't explain this, but it is often speculated that the deceased cannot "get through" to the loved one and contacts someone who is more sensitive.

One of the most important effects of the ADC is its positive effect on the bereavement process. For 36% of the experiencers, the ADC was life-changing; 49% found it important; 9% found it moderately important. ADCs had a significant impact on the experiencers' religious beliefs and spirituality.

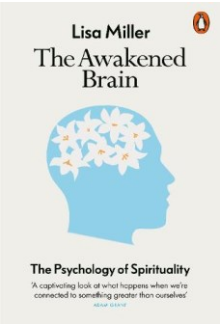
In summary, this is one of the most important books ever written on evidence of life after death in general and ADCs in particular. As an academic who has gone through life asking, "SHOW ME YOUR DATA," I am ecstatic about this landmark book. Also, as a person who never gets tired of reading individual spiritually transformative experiences, this book is a delight!

Ken R. Vincent

Lisa Miller, The Awakened Brain: The Psychology of Spirituality. 272pp, Penguin, ISBN 978-0-141-99103-0, £10.99

The inner and outer journey of a scientist

This is a book for our time: a personal and yet scientifically valid exploration into the overlap between the evolution of professional psychology and the process of spiritual awakening.



Lisa Miller is a professor in the clinical psychology program at Columbia University, Teachers College, and holds a joint appointment in the department of Psychiatry at Columbia Medical School. She describes how, through a series of projects, analysing factors affecting depression, associated MRI scans and related case studies, she has been able, during the course of her career development, to demonstrate that spiritual awakening can often offer a more effective response to depression than that offered by conventional psychiatric, medicinal or psychotherapeutic ones. Her work represents a major breakthrough in bringing humankinds inner dimension into mainstream medicine, identifying links not just between spirituality and clinical depression but a clear material physiological mechanism.

She includes mention of, for example, work by Dr Brad Peterson at Columbia, using neuro imaging techniques, which identify a thinning of the brain's right cortex, in individuals with depression and other mental illness. In another MRI study referred to, "the subjects for whom spirituality and religion were highly important had a healthier neural structure than those for whom spirituality and religion held medium, low or no importance." (p150). Science is finally seeing a spiritual mind (or transcendence consciousness as I would call it) showing up in their physical measurements. Some of us might question why we need scientific proof when, inwardly, we know this anyway, but we still live in a material world. Paradoxically, it may require scientific measurements to prove that there is something beyond the physical, before the mainstream can accept it. That being the case, the more people we can get to read this book and discuss it, the more rapid can a spiritual awakening proceed.

Whilst most of the examples and analyses presented relate to depression, Prof Miller also addresses other mood disorders, addiction and

substance abuse, in an equally compelling way. This book is thus essential reading for anyone looking for solutions to the mental health crisis facing much of the world today.

Reading Lisa's account of bringing a spiritual dimension into her psychotherapeutic practice, research and teaching, whilst navigating her own very personal journey towards parenthood, highlights one of the many integrating theories that she discusses: as above, so below. For example, how our personal, inner, development can mirror and be mirrored in our professional, outer, development. As such, this eminently readable paperback satisfies both the rational, scientific mind, emotional self … and the soul.

This book is so good I read all of it. Usually, I rapid read or skim a book, and that is sufficient to get its gist. Prof Miller's work is both so packed with interesting and meaningful ideas and information and an engaging story that I just couldn't skip any of it. The main text, broken down into sensibly sized chapters, is complemented by an extensive notes section (including wide-ranging academic references) and a useful, detailed index. As such, this is as much academic reference and research material as it is a thought-provoking text for anyone interested in personal development, spirituality or psychology. Although author notes at the start emphasise that this book is not intended to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any specific medical condition, the ideas presented could be of immense value to many who are either going through a major life challenge, on a personal journey or enabling such a journey in others.

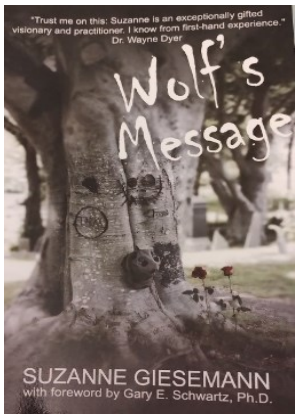
Included is perhaps one of the most accessible explanations of how quantum theory might explain such effects as synchronicity that I have read anywhere. Lisa describes the wave-particle duality, the uncertainty principle and entanglement in a way that normalises the quantum reality: that focusing on something changes its state. If that is true at the subatomic level, why not at the level of human psyche?

The basic premise of this book is that we humans have an innate capacity for and need for a spiritual dimension to our lives. Whilst that will come as no surprise to those reading this review, to many in the scientific and medical community it is still an almost incomprehensible statement. Yet Prof Miller is able to justify it with sound science in a number of specific instances. She presents strong evidence, for example, that individuals who have a spiritual practice or perspective are less likely to become seriously depressed and better able to manage that depression more successfully. Those of us who have and enable transcendent experiences won't be surprised by her findings but to publish hard evidence to support it would seem to be a major step in humanities evolutionary progress. Now the rational mind can agree that "Spirituality is a consciousness for which all of our brains are wired: and that, long-term, the spiritually engaged brain is a healthier brain", and depression looks like "a sensitivity or perceptual capacity–a knock at the door for the opportunity of an awakened brain" (p154).

Chapter 12, 'The two modes of awareness' will be of particular interest to AHT members. Comparing fMRI scans associated with spiritual experience compared to other mental states, Miller identifies an 'awakened awareness' (characterised by a sense of oneness) in contrast to 'achieving awareness': the more typical state of mind in today's striving society. She goes on (in chapter 13) to discuss how we can choose which mode of consciousness to dwell in and to debate the need to integrate them. Fascinating insights, of immediate benefit to all of us. Do buy it, read it... and donate, for example, to a School of Psychology of your choice...

Keith Beasley

Suzanne Giesemann, Wolf's Message. pp178, ISBN-13: 978-1-939116-99-4



Suzanne Giesemann is an evidential medium and spiritual teacher. She especially supports parents whose child has died, by showing them their child is still with them in 'the greater reality' and they can still contact them. At a conference she met the parents of a young man who had died by being struck by lightning, the same way Suzanne's step-daughter had been killed, and on a day when no storm was forecast. A Reading between them was eventually set up, but a few days before it was scheduled the son, whose nickname was Wolf, appeared to Suzanne in the middle of the night and presented a whole pile of evidence; which, of course, she could not validate. She wrote everything down on the notepad she keeps by the bed. Wolf told her to send the transcript to his parents, but not discuss it, and they should "score" it, according to the protocols used by the researcher Prof Gary Swartz. When Prof Swartz analysed the scores, the information provided was about 70 percent correct, which is very good for a medium. Some things the parents did not know, so they scored low.

The Reading with the parents was via computer, with a very strong connection with Wolf and with more verifiable and significant information. Wolf said he would come to his Father each night as he had a message for him.

Only after the Reading did the parents describe Wolf – a gentle soul who did not do well at school, and only had occasional jobs. He seemed to have many friends at different places around the town and would give them small presents, like shaped stones. His passion was drawing and poetry, which he stuck on the walls of his flat. They were often difficult for his parents to understand: yin and yang symbols, runes, and hearts in chains.

After his death the parents went to the tree where Wolf was struck by lightning, and they put two red roses standing in containers beneath. They talked to his friends, who had seen him immediately before his death. The next day, they got the keys to his flat and found, that unlike its usual chaos, everything was tidy, the bed was made, and the kitchen clean. The flat's walls were covered with his drawings and poems as usual, but a new drawing of what looked like an eye, with a yin and yang symbol as the pupil, and squiggly lines, was surrounded by a poem and an old tee-shirt with a bolt of lightning was pinned opposite it.

The poem was:

Spirit of Great Healer
Awaken from within this heart
Peace and tranquillity flow like water
The time has come to allow the light of nature
To free my soul

The parents looked at each other and asked, how did he know he was going to die? When they looked more closely at the picture, the squiggles were a gnarled tree with two standing flowers beneath. He knew his parents were going to put roses there.

Suzanne wanted to work on the unknown information in what she had been given: the phrase jama mama, wheels, Red Flyer wagon, a bird hitting a window and dying, archery, uber-intelligent, chiselling messages in stone, science experiments with beakers, hieroglyphs, runes. Gradually over the coming months Wolf led Suzanne and his parents to decipher the unknown elements and their meaning. The reader is also led, like in a detective story, and it appears that parts of Wolf's life, and the manner of his death, were arranged so that his message could be revealed.

Wolf lived in two worlds. Like other schizo-phrenics he struggled to cope in this world, but it was revealed he was thriving in the other world and operating at a very high level - he had really 'come home' to his true home. It leaves us to ponder how do we respond to people who live in two worlds?

Beth Crutch

Andrew Fellows, Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology. Routledge 2019, 250pp. ISBN 978 1138300507

Introduction and background

The motivation for reading this book partly lies in the (now) fairly distant past – the author was a colleague of mine in the late 1980s – and in part from a review of *Future Sacred: The Connected Creativity of Nature* by Julie Morley that I wrote for De Numine in 2019, and which is the subject of more recent discussion on the Psychology Today website[1,2]. I've been interested in 'environmentalism' since the 1970s, and professionally involved from the mid-80s, subsequently working with Dr Andrew Fellows in the areas of energy, transport and the environment. His 'journey' from sustainable energy specialist to Jungian analyst was, therefore, intriguing and I wanted to understand this better.[3]

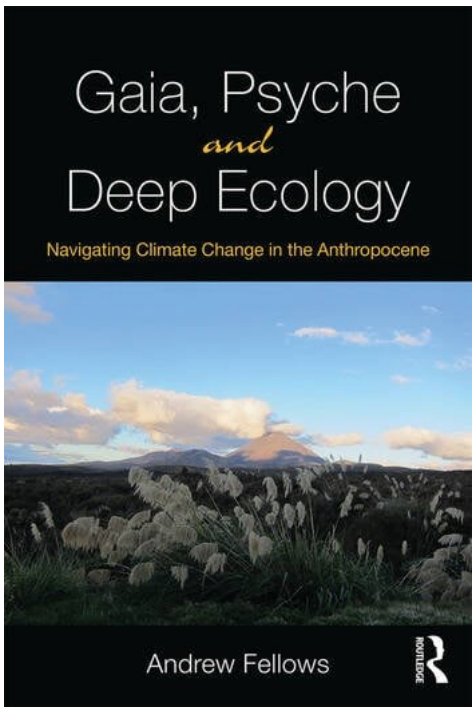
My own interest in Carl Jung began properly around 1990 and I explored some of the territory of *Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology* during the following decade, later venturing in to what could be described as parallel ontological universes, whilst continuing work in the environmental mainstream.

Book context and summary

Although this book is only about two hundred pages long in paperback format, I would describe it as a 'magnum opus:' a narrative which is at once learned and experiential, both reference book and highly informed discourse. Near the beginning Fellows includes a quotation from 'recovering environmentalist', recent convert to Romanian Orthodox Christianity and acclaimed writer Paul Kingsnorth, a shortened version of which opines:

The green movement, which seemed to be carrying all before it in the early 1990s, has plunged into full-on mid-life crisis…There is no likelihood of the world going their way. In most green circles, sooner or later, the conversation comes round to the same questions: what the hell do we do next?

Whilst Kingsnorth has fully embraced religion - Buddhism, Neo-Paganism and latterly Christianity



- Andrew Fellows has found his spiritual pathway through the environmental crisis primarily in analytical psychology (the publisher's main category for *Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology*) combined with holistic systems (notably Gaia) theory for 'navigating climate change in the Anthropocene' (the book's sub-title). A pivotal stage in this archetypal journey was a 'Nature and Human Nature' conference in California during 2007 in which he encounters the term 'ecopsychology.' However, whilst Fellows acknowledges the role of leading counter-cultural philosopher Theodore Roszak in establishing this "as a discipline," he distinguishes his own Jungian perspective from the former's "quasi-Freudian" one.

Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology was widely and favourably reviewed when published in 2019. It was joint winner of the Scientific and Medical Network Book Prize and a 2020 review by director David Lorimer focusses on Andrew Fellows' central 'Psyche-Gaia Conjecture' (of which more later).[4] The world has changed profoundly in a few intervening years, with environmental issues, notably climate change but increasingly biodiversity or nature loss, once again rising up the international agenda. This may

reflect a genuine 'metanoia,' a term used by Fellows, generally understood as a 'revolution in the way we understand our being in the world,' with the added theological meaning of 'transformative change of heart.[5]

Discussion of main themes

Like the Julie Morley book, the present one is very much an inter-disciplinary project. Early on Fellows invokes the wisdom of British philosopher Mary Midgely whose introduction to a 2007 collection entitled *Earthly Realism: The Meaning of Gaia* advocates: "Pluralism pays. We get on better by combining a number of different ways of thinking than by signing up for just one of them… (and) combining the various ways we can use the concept of Gaia." According to its author, *Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology* explores "a three-way synergy between the independent, vital (and arguably vitalist) insights of Jung the psychologist, Lovelock the scientist and Naess the philosopher." Carl Jung was the founder of analytical psychology; James Lovelock proposed the Gaia Hypothesis in which earth functions as a self-regulating system; and, Arne Naess developed the concept of deep ecology. However, there are many other intellectual contributors to the Fellows magnum opus, including Donella Meadows, one of the originators of modern systems thinking and lead author of *The Limits to Growth* report published in 1972 which anticipates later work on planetary boundaries.[6]

Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology is a well-structured, concise, scholarly and original synthesis of key texts dealing with the Anthropocene Epoch, Gaia and systems theory, Jungian and depth psychology as well as deep and spiritual ecology. Andrew Fellows integrates his expertise in physics, environmental sustainability, including climate science, and analytical psychology - along with other wide-ranging intellectual, academic and cultural interests - to demonstrate himself a true polymath. The result is a book that whilst deeply learned also remains grounded and accessible to the general reader: my analogy would be an extended session with a wise therapist. Indeed, Fellows employs the word 'Kairos' by way of inviting the reader to enter in to the eternal 'healing moment'. In Jungian psychology 'Kairos' is associated with "important moments when unconscious eternal time intersects conscious linear time" creating the "possibility of illumination, meaning, and wholeness…"[7] As with 'Metanoia', the term has a theological dimension, suggesting "the time when God acts."[8]

On a civilisation and individual level, Fellows seems to invoke a new 'Axial Age.' The original one was conceived by German philosopher Karl Jaspers as a period encompassing the middle centuries of the first millennium BC during which new philosophical and religious movements flourished across the globe. More recently, the writer on comparative religion Karen Armstrong has described this period as 'The Great Transformation.'[9] A new transformation in personal and global consciousness, particularly in the relationship between nature and humans, is sought in *Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology* to enable the transition to what some call an 'Ecological Civilisation,' although Fellows does not use this expression preferring instead 'biocentric' worldview.[10] This is the nascent or emerging teleological milieu for his 'Psyche-Gaia Conjecture' and one supported by, amongst others, the ecologist Stephan Harding, Deep Ecology Research Fellow at Schumacher College. Last year, Harding published *Gaia Alchemy: The Reuniting of Science, Psyche and Soul* which covers some of the same themes as the Fellows book.[11]

Observations and reflections

In the early summer of 1993 I attended a 'Green Utopias' workshop at the Dartington Hall estate in Devon, home of Schumacher College, led by the veteran environmentalist Jonathon Porritt. His 1984 book *Seeing Green* was instrumental in my decision to become an active member of the environmental movement. By the mid-1990s, however, Porritt seemed less optimistic about the future than a decade earlier. He later co-founded 'Forum for the Future,' marking a shift to corporate sustainable development work, and more recently published Hope in Hell: *A Decade to Confront the Climate Emergency*.[12] Another figure to emerge from the corporate sustainability movement, but with a rather more impending apocalyptic worldview, is 'Professor of

Collapsology' (my description) Jem Bendell who's latest offering, *Breaking Together: a freedom-loving response to collapse*, is published this year.[13] Also described by its author as a 'magnum opus,' one reviewer wittily sums up the book as: *"The mother of all 'mic drops' on the myth of sustainable development."*

Notwithstanding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the 21st century has coincided with a great waning of development optimism, credit-fuelled consumer ideology (extended to the Academy), and existential status anxiety combined with increasingly fraught identity politics. Aside from what many regard as the threat of World War III, we live in an epoch now challenged by the 'unknown unknowns' of artificial intelligence. 'Deep Learning,' which a few years ago meant a return to more traditional pedagogies, is currently described on Amazon's website as "a method in AI that teaches computers to process data in a way that is inspired by the human brain."[14] This has led to increasing concern among the 'Big Tech' community that AI now represents an unprecedented threat to humankind. Yet Gaia Hypothesis originator James Lovelock welcomed 'The Coming Age of Hyperintelligence,' subtitle of his final 2019 book Novacene (co-authored with Brian Appleyard) in which he predicts that AI will increasingly collaborate with natural planetary systems leaving us "all watched over/By machines of loving grace."[15]

Andrew Fellows also refers to the famous 1967 Richard Brautigan poem quoted by Lovelock, but shares the sceptical perspective of a 2011 Richard Curtis BBC television series of the same title.[16,17] However, while the series appears to suggest that "the idea of nature as a self-regulating ecosystem is a machine fantasy," Fellows broadly supports Lovelock's theory of Gaia. This is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as: "the global ecosystem, understood to function in the manner of a vast self-regulating organism, in the context of which all living things collectively define and maintain the conditions conducive for life on earth."[18] *Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology* explores this hypothesis from the position of a Jungian analyst and charts possible responses to it from ecopsychology and deep ecology. In some respects, a better sub-title would be: 'navigating earth system boundaries in the Anthropocene' because the environmental subject-matter is wider than climate change.[19] As a long-time explorer of Carl Jung's writings, I found Fellows' skilled deployment of these helpful and illuminating. After finishing the book, what might be described as a synchronicity occurred, when I discovered a volume entitled *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends – Practicing Deep Ecology* at my local bus stop pre-loved depository. An excellent article by the same author, Bill Devall, can be found in 'Further Reading.'[20]

Janet Mackinnon

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Steve Taylor, DisConnected. pp288, Iff Books, ISBN 978-1803410302

Dis Connected is Steve Taylor's work out of his expertise as a spiritual psychologist, drawing the power of connection to bring healing in our lives. I love this open and challenging book. Connection gives rise to those human qualities such as compassion and brings us a sense of oneness. For Taylor, spirituality emerges from our desire for connection and is essentially the essence of spirituality evidenced in world religions and faith communities. Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, etc, are all ways of travelling towards connection or oneness. Spirituality and Connection are synonymous.

Taylor breaks down the easily misunderstood theory that human cruelty as seen in criminals who possess personality traits lacking in empathy, or are motivated by a sense of hatred or humiliation and/or a desire for power and attention. Of those who perpetrate human cruelty, deriving from childhood trauma or abusive backgrounds, he writes: 'the more emotionally deprived and abusive a person's childhood is, the more disconnected they are likely to become'.

Taylor addresses disconnection not just in individuals, but also the concept of disconnected societies, including political disconnection and of course helps us with the trajectory to reconnection. We are all in some way disconnected, but the definition of hyper-disconnected people describes those drawn to human cruelty as a behaviour pattern as a result of their hyper-disconnection.

Taylor shares a model he calls "The Continuum of Connection". We all sit somewhere on this spectrum from those who have a very strong sense of empathy to a place where there is a state of complete disconnection. There are hyper-connected people and hyper-disconnected people who occupy a closed mental space and who lack the fluidity that hyper-connected people feel in relation to the natural world, animals and other human beings. Spiritually awakened people are one and the same as hyper-connected, having a strong sense of connection to others.

He introduces us to the concept of pathocracy coined by Polish psychologist Andrzej Lobaczewski [the study of the relationship between power and personality disorders] as a form of government that sits alongside or even overlaps with oligarchies, autocracies and democracies. Lobaczewski suffered in his early life under the Nazi regime. Nazi Germany is given as an example of pathocracy. Hitler's psychological traits discovered at the time and posthumously as psychologically disordered is a classic hyper-disconnected person with the trauma and abusive childhood that is seen in many hyper-disconnected individuals. Hitler attracted other hyper-disconnected individuals into his government, namely Goebbels, Heydrich and Himmler.

Taylor reminds us that pathocracy is not solely connected to individuals or dictators. The degrees of connection and disconnection means

that some pathocracies may be less extreme even in countries where there is 'some degree of democracy'. When such a context emerges, the political landscapes might then see the connected individuals leave the government and at the same time it may be infused with hyper-disconnected people assuming power over the majority of psychologically normal people.

Taylor gives a number of examples and case studies to illustrate the impact of hyper-disconnection e.g. impact in Marxism to Korean communist rule. Contemporary examples of the effects of hyper-disconnected people and their pathocratic regimes are Joel Bolsanaro's encouragement of the destruction of the Amazon Rainforest and Donald Trump's roll back of environment protections and his withdrawal from the Paris Climate agreement.

"Hyper-disconnected people distrust and try to obstruct any positive development that represents social progress. They take a perverse pleasure in disparaging people who try to fight against injustice to protect the environment, or who act altruistically in a general sense. Such people are referred to as 'do-gooders' or 'snowflakes'".

And there is a chapter on Spiritual Pathocracy, discussing spiritual hyper-disconnected leaders who have used their status and spiritual knowledge to gain power. He gives examples of spiritually hyper-disconnected individuals, e.g. Bikram Choudhary, and examines the conduct of the American Guru Andrew Cohen. A former student writes of Cohen in his book American Guru and describes a textbook description of a hyper-disconnected personality.

Dis-Connected is a sobering and timely call for our urgent need for connection or re-connection in our times. We have to wait until Chapter 12 out of 14 chapters in the book to explore the link between disconnection and the hope in living connected lives. He also explores the personality traits of the hyper-connected person. Most of us sit between the two extreme ends of the continuum.

The hyper-connected person has a steadiness of being, always attuned to their fundamental oneness with others. The hyper-connection is something that pervades their whole life. These are people on the right side of the continuum of connection. Hyper-connected people are givers and healers or desire to be so or to offer themselves in service. Hyper-connected people are selfless. Hyper-connected people have the spiritual development of others as a focus and want to participate in alleviating suffering.

Examples of hyper-connected people in the book include the women's rights activist Dr Rezvan Moghaddam whose work centred around violence against women, and Paul Diwaker who spent his life campaigning for the rights of Dalits. Taylor describes the psychology of the hyper-connected person as expansive and those who look to identify with others – 'the sense of identification and affection that most people feel towards their spouse or family extends to the human race as a whole'

I like what Taylor has to say about hyper-connected leaders or 'enlightened managers' or the 'servant leader' as those leaders who seek to serve rather than dominate. Taylor suggests that all leaders are vulnerable to the leadership trap and potentially could become narcissistic and corrupt, but 'the more connected a person is the less vulnerable they are to the leadership trap'.

Not all women leaders are hyper-connected, but there is an interesting discussion in the book where Taylor says of women, that they are generally further along the continuum of connection than men with higher levels of empathy and altruism – there are less crimes committed by women for example. Disconnected societies call for men to be ruthless and individualist and emotions and empathy is suppressed. This may account for the differences.

The evidence of all the research in Taylor's book is immense and this is not a comfortable read, but an important one.

If the John Gartner quote on the cover of his book is accurate -"…why malignant narcissists are taking over the world in the 21st Century" - then it does become a critical book, but one for me that also creates a canvass for the urgency and

importance of connection with all things, which is at the roots of my own Christian Mystical tradition and the teaching of Christ about his own oneness with the Father. For Christ followers, the universal unity and oneness of all things is the root to our connectedness.

Taylor is explicit about the outcomes of a hyper-disconnected world and the book is also a wake-up call to re-connect to God, others and ourselves, i.e. to grow towards a hyper-connected world.

Venerable Karen Lund

Mario Beauregard, Expanding Reality: The Emergence of Postmaterialist Science. iff Books, Winchester, UK, 2021, 182pp

Mario Beauregard is both a neuroscientist and a mystic. He includes some of his mystical experiences throughout the book. The book includes chapters on parapsychology, the placebo effect, and remote healing, but the majority of the book is about spiritual/religious experience that will be of interest to members of the Alister Hardy Trust. These include near-death experiences, shared death experiences, death-bed visions, reincarnation, and mystical/religious/spiritual experiences.

Dr Beauregard is among a growing number of neuroscientists who believe that pure consciousness preceded matter in creation, which, to me, sounds a lot like our ancestors who saw God as the Great Spirit who dreamed the world into existence.

Chapter 1, "Thoughts that Transform the Body," includes research on the placebo effect, as well as its mirror opposite, the nocebo effect. An example of the nocebo effect is when participants in the placebo group of a chemotherapy drug trial were told that the drug could have negative side effects; 30% of this group reportedly lost their hair. Psychoneuroimmunology is also discussed.

Chapters 2 to 6 deal with parapsychology including remote viewings and premonitions; psychokinesis and the brain as a "quantum" system; the effects of human intention on plants and distant healing via prayer; near-death experiences (NDEs); and after-death communications (ADCs).

Chapter 7, "Past Lives or Fantasy," covers research into reincarnation. The bulk of cases in this chapter are taken from the 2,500 cases of children who remember past lives that are on file at the Division of Perceptual Studies in the Medical School of the University of Virginia. Some of the pitfalls of using hypnosis to recall past lives are also discussed.

In Chapter 8, "Journeys to the Source," he deals with spiritual and mystical experiences. Included is a discussion of Kundalini yoga and shamanic experiences with and without entheogens. Spiritually transformative experiences effects on mental health are included. Dr Beauregard makes a point that neuroimaging studies have shown that a larger part of the brain is involved in spiritual experiences than was once thought, when the "God Module" was thought to be located in the temporal lobe.

Dr Beauregard concludes that the human brain is the receiver of consciousness and not its originator. In other words, our brain operates as a receiver of consciousness, like the TV set in your living room receives signals from a distant source. William James and Frederic Myers first proposed this idea over a century ago.

In summary, this book is worthwhile addition to the library of anyone interested in religious/spiritual experience. A vast number of topics are covered, and a wealth of data and examples are included. I have read it through twice - and parts of it four times!

Ken R Vincent

Mara Freeman, Sacred Rose: The Soul's Path to Beauty and Wisdom. Matador, 2023. pp193. ISBN 978 1803136 240 Paperback £12.99

When I first held this book in my hands I felt that the story of the rose, explored here with such beautiful illustrations and impeccable scholarship, deserved a bigger, glossier 'coffee table' book to do it justice. However, after living with the book while writing this review I have come to appreciate it as a companion: easy to carry with me, to have by my side during the meditations which follow each section, and simply to enjoy again and again.

It is a magical little book, like a Tardis; once inside you are taken on a journey of astounding breadth and depth 'from limited self to infinite consciousness': Ms Freeman follows the rose as a magical and spiritual symbol throughout the breadth and depth of history, mythology and many different cultures and religions. As the lotus in Eastern traditions is a symbol of enlightenment, so the rose in the Western tradition, which has its roots in the ancient Middle East and Persia, is widely seen as 'a path to spiritual realisation and also its attainment'. And in the Western tradition the rose resonates with the Grail as a symbol of the soul: 'Both these symbols suggest the receptive vessel of the soul, opening to receive divine Grace.'

With the meditations that interweave the text as the story unfolds we are invited to travel ourselves on the Path of the Rose. She is the portal into the magical lands she inhabits. We meet Goddesses, Alchemists, Poets, Magical Creatures and Beings of myth and legend... Each chapter is beautifully illustrated with plates from a wide range of sources, many contemporaneous with the rose's journey through history and myth that the chapter explores.

In order not to interrupt the flow of her text, the author includes a wealth of additional commentary and information italicised within borders, which add greatly to the story of the rose through the ages. Although the scholarship is impeccable, and includes a wealth of detail, the design of the book makes for easy reading, which, given that it contains so many treasures, is a quite remarkable feat.

Patricia Murphy

Evelyn Elsaesser, Talking with Angel about Illness, Death and Survival. Roundfire Books, 192pp, ISBN 978-1803413303

Evelyn Elsaesser is a Swiss writer, lecturer and researcher of many books and papers on the subject of Near Death Experiences and After Death Communications. In this superb fictional account of a young girl's discovery that she has a terminal disease, Elsaesser elucidates how the fear of death is as paralysing as the disease itself. Our protagonist is a young nameless girl who has been diagnosed with leukaemia and is taken to hospital hoping for a cure, but discovering that this disease is terminal. We are drawn into her world along this emotional roller coaster of a journey experiencing the devastating effect of medication, and her fear of death that she believes will lead to her total extinction, but she changes to a grateful acceptance and serenity beyond mere words.

She has loving parents but sees through their attempts at being cheerful on their visits to her, sensing it as an act to cover up their own fears and heartbreak. Eventually she realises that life not only continues after death, but also that consciousness enters another realm. This awakening is achieved by many conversations, in the form of Platonic teachings and Socratic dialogues, with her doll called Angel. This very precious knitted doll was a gift made by her beloved late grandmother, and is her vital link to that special person. The doll is her main source of deep comfort throughout. The dialogue begins to sound as if it is less between a young girl and her

muse but by a far more mature and highly educated person. However, this does not detract from the emotional and evocative effect it has on the reader.

In hospital she makes friends with other children of various ages also suffering with leukaemia. Some are more advanced in their stages, which she finds terrifying until she becomes like them as her own condition deteriorates. Throughout the treatment phases, board and card games are enjoyed with her friends in the common room, who have become a comfort to each other.

Her dialogue with Angel allows her to express all her inner fears while moving towards an alternative perspective of death, this being merely the transitional phase towards shedding her sick body and flying away. She draws on the analogy of a caterpillar becoming a butterfly.

A special friend she has made on the ward is James who is also in his final stages, and is quite sceptical of the way she talks about Angel's revelations. When he develops complications and experiences a cardiac arrest, his attitude changes. It is during those vital minutes when his NDE occurs. What follows reads like a highly detailed account of an NDE, comparable with Saul's biblical experience on the road to Damascus. There are clear, compelling descriptions of James' encounters with the 'light beings', meeting the Absolute Being who wordlessly takes him on a detailed and accurate visual review of his whole young lifetime. He meets his dead relatives who walk with him through colourful scenes of iridescent flowers in shimmering fields towards a stream where he sees a man with children whom he doesn't recognise until later. He learns it is himself as an adult. Suddenly he is being forced to return. Seeing his body from above, he watches the actions of the medical team, although desperately not wanting to return to that body, longing to stay in the light realm. The Absolute Being had already told him that he must return and complete his life, which has a unique purpose. The resuscitation brings him back. On waking he writes a long letter to his friend telling her of his experience in great detail. He has had a miraculous healing and is cured. It is this final revelation which helps his friend to accept her own death with serenity.

This book is a masterpiece and my words cannot do it justice. It begs to be read in its entirety. It is transformative to all who care to delve into this exceptional account of an NDE. Evelyn Elsaesser writes with an originality comparable to Virginia Woolf. It can be read by all questioners about the perplexity of life and who also have a fear of the inevitability of death.

> Life is eternal;
> And love is immortal;
> And death is only a horizon;
> And a horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight.
>
> Rossiter Worthington Raymond, 1840–1918

Wendy Godber

Yaden, David B & Newberg, Andrew B (2022) The Varieties of Spiritual Experience: 21st Century Research and Perspectives. Oxford, OUP, pp430. ISBN 9780190665678 (hardback). £22.63.

As its title implies, this book picks up where William James left off. David Yaden and Andrew Newberg are familiar names to students of spiritual experience, and they build on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, published in 1902, incorporating over a century of research. They cover the fields of psychology, psychiatry, pharmacology, religious studies, philosophy, anthropology and neuroscience. Newberg, author of twelve books, is Professor at Thomas Jefferson University and is an authority on 'neurotheology' – the study of changes in the brain and body of people having spiritual experiences. Yaden is Assistant Professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Sciences and researches the long term impact of brief inner experiences.

The book is not a difficult read, despite the complexity of the material. It is divided into three parts: The Science of Altered States; The

Varieties; Considerations and Applications. The layout is clear, and separately titled sections in each chapter are helpful, with the last section frequently focusing on neuroscience, explaining the latest research in relation to spiritual experience. Each chapter has a conclusion, summarising its content, and each has its own list of references.

In his Gifford Lectures (1901-1902), published as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James wanted to shift the emphasis from the study of religious doctrines and beliefs, to a focus on experience, the personal rather than the institutional side of religion. He quoted extensively from the work of his erstwhile student, Edwin Starbuck, giving examples of a range of accounts of experience deemed religious or spiritual. Yaden and Newberg find that what James studied would nowadays be referred to as spiritual rather than religious, hence their relabelling of James' title.

The authors consider what progress has been made in the field since James, and they refer to the work of Alister Hardy and David Hay (p. 67) in their collection of accounts of experiences and surveys undertaken. They confirm that these methods have stood the test of time and have established that 'spiritual experiences are surprisingly prevalent today'. The authors hope to lift the veil of silence around the sharing of such experiences, which persists today and is often referred to by correspondents sending accounts to the RERC.

Yaden and Newberg consider James' view that brain physiology, while of interest, cannot determine the value or spiritual significance of the experience, which lies in the fruits not the roots. However, modern neuroimaging technologies have enabled a clearer understanding of the biological dimension. The correlation between spiritual experiences and brain neuroscience, can now be explored more fully, offering a deeper understanding of the effects of spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation on practitioners. This includes the use of psychedelics in controlled environments, which has led to the view that, properly administered, such interventions can have a positive impact on mental illness.

The authors consider how different approaches can lead to different emphases in interpretation of the experiences. Anthropologists and students of religion tend to focus on the cultural differences, so veer towards a constructivist view; whereas the more scientifically orientated psychologists, psychiatrists and neuroscientists focus on the similarity of human biology leading to a more perennialist interpretation; while philosophers probe the hard question of how the physical brain can produce mind, or consciousness. While exploring the causes, correlates and consequences of spiritual experiences, the authors acknowledge that we may never be able to fully explain them. Belief in a metaphysical reality underlying the experiences varies and 'a sense of epistemic humility' is required.

James concluded that in general, spiritual experiences cause happiness and lead to altruism, thus benefitting the experiencers and those around them. While the authors, like James, find the majority of spiritual experiences to be positive, sections on 'Positive and Pathological' outcomes are covered for balance.

A book which sets itself up as a follow-on to the classic volume on religious experience has taken on a mammoth task and in my view it succeeds brilliantly. I am not alone in that opinion. Encomia come from Former Prime Minister of Australia, Kevin Rudd, who says that this work will become a classic, that Yaden and Newberg have provided the world with a 21st Century James; Martin E. P. Seligman, Professor of Psychology, University of Pennsylvania says that this is 'The most important book on the science of religion in my lifetime' and Dacher Keltner, Professor of Psychology, UC Berkeley, suggests that the book 'will bring you wonder, inspiration, and awe. It is for our 21st century what William James's Varieties book was for the 20th century: a comprehensive, open-minded, rigorous exploration of human spiritual life.' I can highly recommend it to AHT members.

Dr Marianne Rankin
AHT Director of Communications

POEMS

Ancestry

Ancestry?
Now? Then? Yet to be?
Is this a Trinity that works with me?
An ever-present trinity?
Are we merely of ancestors' DNA
With which we live from day to day?
But what on earth is 'Ancestry'?
What is it that remains through Eternity?
Maybe simply Spirituality?

Mary Milner Cook

The Monastery

Silence still captured within walls
of a building that is empty.

The walls are solid,
but the sea claims their edges.

All the monks seats in the chapel are vacant.
A candle burns brightly
for the long-gone community.

© Dennis Evans, Kefalonia, Greece

A doorway to the sea on Kefalonia (R Riachi)

OBITUARIES

Reflections on Dr Greg Barker (1963-2023)

I first met Greg when I took up the post of administrator of the RERC and Alister Hardy Trust at Lampeter in 2002. Using the adjacent office to me, I soon discovered that he was working on a PhD looking at the way in which Jesus Christ was portrayed by non-Christian religions. We got on well and I attended a number of talks which he gave on his draft PhD as it developed. He did some administrative work for the University at Lampeter, but his main role followed an appointment at Trinity College Carmarthen when he became acting head of Religion and Religious Studies.

After a while he asked me if I could join his team as a part-time member to lecture on the subject of Science and the Arts – A Challenge to Religion. Whilst this was only one long afternoon a week, during this time Greg welded his team of half a dozen mostly part-timers together and it proved under Greg's leadership a rewarding and enjoyable time for all of us. Around this time he also became director of the Religious Experience Research Centre at Lampeter where he maintained the contribution given by Professor Paul Badham, who brought the Trust to Lampeter and, incidentally, was also Greg's supervisor.

Greg and Paul Badham (2011, Taiwan)

After gaining his PhD, Greg broke away from his work at Carmarthen and Lampeter and became an Associate of Winchester University, a lifetime coach and schools counsellor, and gave many inspiring talks on religious studies to schools both in England and Wales. Throughout the whole of our association I have known Greg as a friend to the Alister Hardy Trust, where he gave a number of talks and especially the Keynote speech at the AHT / World Congress of Faiths conference in 2011. He will be sadly missed especially by membership of the old Alister Hardy Society.

Dr David Greenwood

Greg with Paul Badham and Bettina Schmidt and others (2011 Taiwan)

I met Greg when he relocated to Lampeter to undertake doctoral studies. I was following the MA programme in Religious Experience, so our paths crossed frequently. We had various 'study weeks' throughout the year and Greg often joined in the lectures and on one memorable occasion gave a lecture to our MA group. I say 'memorable' because it was not just his enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject that I recall, but also the fact that he entered the lecture theatre with a tray of warm muffins which he handed out to those present. I think some of the group were a little bemused by this, perhaps thinking that this must be how American academics tamed their students! For me it was a

lovely and welcome gesture and I have always remembered it.

Greg and I completed our studies in the same year so I was privileged to meet his family following the graduation ceremony and then later in the day when we all ended up in the same cafe in Lampeter.

I have many fond memories of time spent with Greg and was saddened to hear of his illness and passing. I would like to send my condolences to his family at this very tough time.

Andy Burns
Former Chair of the AHS

Greg always seemed to me a breath of fresh air in the Alister Hardy Trust. He was lively and engaging – never more so than when facing a hall full of teenage students. He got them to think and to express themselves on the subject of spirituality. I was invited to speak at one such event when several schools brought a group of sixth formers to Lampeter, so I could really appreciate his impact. In later years he arranged and presented webinars for students and also teachers of Religious Studies. His topics were wide-ranging, yet all the while bearing in mind the needs of GCSE and A-Level exams.

Greg gave the Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture in 2011 and was popular with members. Greg and I kept in touch after he left the AHT and on my occasional visits to Lampeter, I enjoyed meeting up with him. I will miss him.

Marianne Rankin
(AHT Director of Communications)

Greg with Karen Wiggins on her Graduation Day at Lampeter, playfully pointing out how Greg had helped her to decide on her Masters topic.

Susan Glyn, 17th May 1923 - 4th July 2023

Alister Hardy member Susan Glyn led an artist's life. She began writing poetry as a child and her poems have been published in many periodicals and anthologies and won prizes. Her flair for creative writing was nurtured at home in Wales (she didn't go to school), and she descends from Alaw Goch, the Welsh bard and poet.

After four years in the Army serving in a mixed anti-aircraft battery based in Hyde Park and the South Coast, Susan married author Anthony Glyn and was the mother of novelist and artist Caroline Glyn, and contemporary quilter Vicky Glyn; a dynasty of talented creatives. During her married life she qualified as a Barrister, and practised for a while on the Wales and Chester Circuit, but soon life with her husband moved to Paris. She and her husband led a nomadic Bohemian lifestyle, living in different countries, but mostly in Paris. Susan described it: "My husband loved climbing mountains, sailing, skiing and driving. I managed to keep up with him, except in his climbing — I painted the mountains while he went up them".

While living in Paris, Susan developed her artistic talent to become a successful artist, doing relief panels, slab-glass designs and sculptures. Several of her sculpture designs were made into bronze medals by the French Mint, a great honour. Her work was exhibited in several churches in the UK, and also Canada and the USA, but mainly in France, taking part in many of the annual famous art "Salons" in Paris, and Biennales and Triennales in the Grand Palais. Meanwhile her husband was having great successes with a series of avant-garde novels and also travel books, including The Companion Guide to Paris. Dressed in stylish clothes, they became a well-known couple around the Left Bank of Paris. Anthony was later awarded the highest medal of the City of Paris, entitling him to be buried in the Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, where the two of them are now buried together.

Their final years were spent in the Baie des Anges, near Nice, where Susan published a book which combines both her poetry and her art, entitled "The Word and the Image". It is a contemporary artist's vision of the Bible. This was combined with a traveling show of prints of all her artwork, and poetry books, which circulated round churches, Christian cafes and cathedrals for four years in the UK very successfully, often as part of a fund raising initiative for Sight Savers, Susan's favourite charity, as her own eyesight steadily deteriorated.

In 2007 Susan was made a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts, a well-deserved honour bestowed upon her, a Christian artist of exceptional skill and lasting faith.

Susan continued writing poetry and being active in several art and poetry related societies, living in the South of France, and celebrated her 100th birthday there with a champagne party. Feeling that all had been accomplished after that, she died at home peacefully a few weeks later.

Vicky Glyn

REPORTS

Director of Communications

Events

This year we enjoyed two events on Zoom. David Lorimer, Scientific and Medical Network Programme Director, Editor of Paradigm Explorer and Chair of the Galileo Commission gave a wonderful presentation on his poems from Better Light a Candle, which was illustrated by his beautiful slides. This offered us a morning of pleasant reflection, a spiritual experience in itself.

In the evening of August 12th Dr Gregory Shushan spoke on The Next World: Culture, Religion, and Extraordinary Experiences of the Afterlife. Gregory is a historian of religions, with degrees in Egyptian Archaeology, Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology, Research Methods in the Humanities, and Religious Studies. He is Visiting Research Fellow at University of Winchester's Centre for Death, Religion and Culture, and an Adjunct Professor in Thanatology at Marian University. He has now undertaken a second PhD at Newman University, Birmingham. There was a large audience for this fascinating talk, which described NDEs across cultures and throughout the ages. Many AHT members already knew Greg from his time as Honorary Research Fellow at UWTSD in Lampeter. The event has been recorded and is available on the AHT website.

Members' Day 2023

We will be able to meet in person for our annual gathering at the Friends' Meeting House in Oxford on October 21st. Andy Burns and I, with help from Mike Rush, are arranging another hybrid event. This will enable those who cannot travel, to join us online. The event will begin at 10.30 and end at 16.00 as usual.

John Harper will give the annual Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture on Sacred Space and Spiritual Experience in the morning. The lecture will explore aspects of the sacred and the spaces we hold to be sacred, asking how and why that is so. This extends far beyond the spiritual experience of buildings that have come to be regarded as sacred.

Professor Harper is currently honorary archivist and vice chair of the Alister Hardy Trust. He led a major research project on The Experience of Worship in Late Medieval Cathedral and Parish Church. He holds emeritus, honorary and visiting professorships at Bangor, Birmingham and Bishop Grosseteste universities; he is also emeritus director of The Royal School of Church Music and honorary research fellow of the University of Wales Trinity St David.

In the afternoon there will be a presentation and discussion on The Alister Hardy Trust – current projects and plans for the future.

Charges will be:

In person attendance £20;
(Full-time students £10)

Online attendance £15;
(Full-time students £8)

The morning will be an open event, but the afternoon is for members only.

Booking can be made through Eventbrite. Please see the separate notice about this. Those attending in Oxford will also be able to pay at the door.

We very much look forward to seeing you either in Oxford or online.

Marianne Rankin

Oxford and Cotswold Group meetings summer 2023

Among the recent meetings we had a very interesting group discussion in March on Cosmology, from the point of view of humanity and consciousness rather than the astronomical aspects.

Many ideas were discussed, including Pilate's comment, two thousand years ago, 'What is truth?'; the way that science describes a rainbow, for example, in terms of the wavelengths of light but our brains assign colours to the different wavelengths; the question of scale – how our perspective changes as we zoom in on the details, and the way the cultural milieu prevalent at a given time influences our ideas and interpretation of events.

In April we had a free-ranging discussion on whatever came to mind! One interesting analogy concerning the soul and the body involved the fingers of a hand and glove puppets which fitted over the fingers and represented our bodies. When the glove puppet is removed (as when we die), our essence is still there and connected to the whole. Analogies and examples, though imperfect, are important as our language is so often unable to describe or account for events accurately.

In July and August Rhonda gave two talks on after death communications and End-of-Life Experiences (similar I understand, but briefer, to the annual course she runs at the Glenthorne Study Centre in Grasmere). The excellent presentations stimulated discussion among us with those present contributing many interesting anecdotes involving both human and animal passings. (See below for a report on the August talk.)

As always, we thank Trish, Beth and Clare for organisation and catering – our meetings may be aiming for a higher plane of knowledge/ experience, but day to day existence requires tea, coffee and cake!

Neil Hancox

The Oxford Branch of the Alister Hardy Trust met on 5th August last in Kidlington, where Rhonda Riachi led on End of Life Experiences (ELEs). At the beginning of the session we were asked to visualise who or what we wanted to meet first immediately after our deaths. (In my case my mother, who only died in 2016, aged 103!)

Dr Peter Fenwick had recorded three particular commonalities in ELEs (as outlined in The Art of Dying):

1. Visions of deceased family or friends coming to help the dying 'cross over'.
2. Comfortable transitions, often with love and light.
3. Coincidental experiences by loved ones, felt or seen at the moment of death, often when very far away.

Other phenomena were often experienced: clocks stopping, animals and birds behaving strangely, warm and loving presences, and the rainbow over Windsor when the Queen died.

Lucid last moments from confused, semi-conscious individuals were mentioned: a physical rally just long enough for final farewells. Grieving family and friends can be enormously helped by witnessing such phenomena.

A TED-X talk was then shown of Dr Christopher Kerr on 'dreams and visions of the dying'. He had been a hospice doctor for many years, and had been present many times when phenomena as listed above had occurred. He can be found on YouTube (search for "I see dead people" by Dr Christopher Kerr).

Ian Fordyce

South East Wales Group meeting, 14th June 2023

Music - the art-form through Time to Eternity

{March 15th	Blossoming	(Rhythm)	Music and initial Spiritual Awareness}
June 14th	**Fruiting**	**(Melody)**	**Performing**

We hear that Bach is probably the most spiritually led of all composers - after all, he was mainly employed by the church, though I have heard it said that everything Bach wrote was immersed in the spiritual - from his deepest soul. Handel is reported to have said that while writing the Halleluiah Chorus he saw the heavens open!

Paul McCartney woke up with a catchy tune in his head, which, before he had discovered words for his song, he had called "Scrambled Egg". Today we all know it as "Yesterday". Of course, that could happen to any of us, couldn't it!

While practising a Chopin étude in a college studio something very strong happened to me – involving, remotely, a good friend. This was the most professional performance I could produce. It was extremely special – as if playing itself, through my hands! Spiritual? I was reaching out to my friend and completely immersed. I later found out the friend had walked past the college, synchronically, but then decided it was more important for me to practice!

The spiritual can connect players in a very real way – it can take over, making the quartet, or the orchestral work a real Unity. By letting go of the ego (this idea expressed in a recent music TV programme) they (the audience even,) can unify. In my case, I have felt this most in chamber music. Oh wonderful Borodin!! ("This is my beloved")

Could Mozart, or Yehudi Menuhin, both very young prodigies, have been reincarnations?

On the other end of life, Grandma, on her death-bed said to us, "I can hear angels singing!" but was clearly unimpressed. When I asked if it was nice, she glumly said, "It's all right..."

Finally, at the close of Matins at St Hugh's chapel the young organ-scholar gave a sparkling rendition of Vidor's Toccata. The congregation exited, but I felt I had to sit down, overwhelmed by the virtuosity, and the wonder of the music, the soul of the music. Then a few of those on the point of leaving, sat down too, and at the end, enthusiastically applauded! It only took one person to prompt others to listen too! His friends talking to him after the service said how wonderful it was. He nervously laughed, saying it was the first time he had played it "in public", delighted by the response.

To close our meeting, a member had brought along a CD of Mozart's 21st piano concerto, K467, and played us the Andante, which we all appreciated as a deep way to end a very satisfactory meeting.

Mary Cook GGSM, ARCM, LGSM

Mary writes that this will be her last report as the South-east Wales Group has now folded. Thank you very much, Mary, for many years of convening and reporting on this group!

EVENTS

The Alister Hardy Trust Annual General Meeting
13th December 2023
11am GMT (on Zoom)

The Agenda and Zoom link will be sent to all members shortly.

Contact: admin@alisterhardytrust.org