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PLEASE NOTE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS
FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO *DE NUMINE*

Please send all contributions to the Editor: theotokos66@gmail.com
and copy to the Assistant Editor: denumine@gmail.com

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

The views expressed in *De Numine* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the Alister Hardy Trust, or the Religious Experience Research Centres.

The Editor

Photographs supplied by

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Editorial

I would like to congratulate Mike Rush on his election as an AHT trustee. He already serves as an excellent webmaster, and I applaud his willingness to take on more work for the Trust; I am sure we will all benefit from his appointment.

This is the first year that erstwhile Alister Hardy Society members have been invited to the Trust AGM; previously of course the Society AGM was held at Open Day. As Marianne Rankin mentions in her report on page 4, only two members attended; it remains to be seen whether this situation will continue. It is worth remembering that since the Society has been incorporated, we are now all members of the Trust and have voting rights.



AHT Members Day (formerly the Society's Open Day) continues to be well attended. There are two excellent reports on this year's event. The first one, by Professor Jeff Astley, is a summary of his Alister Hardy Memorial lecture, and this is followed by a report from Marianne Rankin on the afternoon panel and discussion. Both are well worth reading, as reminders and a record of a great day for those who attended, and as a chance to be informed, in detail, for those of us who could not attend. Thanks are due to Marianne Rankin and Professor Astley for writing these excellent reports for *De Numine*; the following two issues arise from these:

First, when reading the lecture summary I missed having references to follow up – for instance Jeff refers to 'an early review of the work of Alister Hardy and the Religious Experience Research Unit' by Simon Tugwell that I was unaware of, nor could I find a reference on the website. So please can contributors of scholarly submissions (articles and some book reviews) include references. Second, Marianne says in her report 'The discussion was then opened to the floor and a range of responses to the questions was expressed, which are not recorded here.' Members wishing to continue the discussion might bear in mind that *De Numine* as a forum for debate is dear to my heart, so please write in. On this note I was particularly pleased to get the letter from Harry Houghton, in response to a question I raised in my editorial last time, outlining some of his intriguing theories on the nature of the soul.

Readers will notice that the events pages are much curtailed, reflecting the changing pattern of group interaction between members, and with other organisations. Dr Keith Beasley's account of how the group in North Wales has evolved in concert with others of like mind is particularly interesting in this context (see page 30). I would like to repeat my invitation to members to send in notices of events that are of interest, and also to send in reports of events they may have attended. Please note copy deadlines inside the back cover of *De Numine*.

Llantarnam: On Mary Cook's initiative there will be another Llantarnam Gathering this year in September, hosted by the S. E. Wales group, to which all members of the Trust are warmly welcomed. Please contact Mary in good time if you are interested as accommodation at the Abbey is limited (see Events, page 55).

Patricia Murphy

Report from the Director of Communications

My report was given to the Alister Hardy Trust AGM last year; it gives a summary of my activities for the year [see page 26]. The AGM papers are included in the journal because only two AHT members managed to attend the AGM in Birmingham in November and it was felt that all members should have a chance to read the documents.

As the AGM and Members Day are now separate events, Andy Burns and I, as responsible for the AHT Membership and Activities Group, are planning to offer the opportunity of a catch-up on Members Day on 14th October 2017. We will give everyone the opportunity to hear about local groups, AHT activities and to put forward any matters they wish to raise on the AGM agenda.

Although at the moment we have just three local groups (Oxford & Cotswold, South East Wales, and the North Wales groups), there is always the opportunity for members to gather in small groups for discussion. Years ago, in Lechlade, we formed a study group and worked through various Occasional Papers. The sessions were most interesting as we all read the papers before the meetings and took turns to lead the sessions. Getting a group of people to focus on a single theme proved valuable on Members Day 2016 as my report on page 26 describes.

Despite fewer local groups, the AHT remains in good heart. We have two RERCs – at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Lampeter and at Glyndŵr University in Wrexham. At the University of Warwick, we have the Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience, Professor Jeff Astley and the Chair of Trustees, Professor Leslie Francis. From the reports from the Professors and RERC Directors you can see that there is much research activity underway. Andy and I will ensure that we hold two AHT events each year – one in London and Members Day in Oxford. At the moment, the plan is for the London event to be shared with another like-minded organisation. This year we will join the British Teilhard Association and the flier for 3rd June 2017 is included with this issue.

Sadly, not all organisations are able to weather the storms of modernity, or the younger generation's reluctance to join or work for groups such as ours. After a rich and valuable period of activity, the life of the Wrekin Trust has come to an end. We have very fond memories of collaboration with Wrekin over the years and will miss their unique contribution. A special celebration to mark the closure and to herald two legacy projects is planned for March at Hawkwood College in Stroud, Gloucestershire.*

I look forward to meeting many of you in London in June if not before, in any case at one of the events highlighted in this issue of *De Numine*. This journal is one of the joys of AHT membership and forms a link between members, offers a forum for discussion and each issue is a delight, packed with a variety of fascinating articles. Thank you, Patricia and Jean for maintaining such a high standard.

Marianne Rankin

* See letter from the Wrekin Trust, sent in by Marianne, on page 40. Ed

Metamorphosis

Abstract. The term 'metamorphosis' finds application in many areas of human endeavour: music, literature, science and spirituality for example. The word implies that an individual person or thing remains, in some sense, essentially the same although their outward form may change. For human individuals, that essential and constant core is the human soul and the aim of our life on Earth is the refinement of that soul towards ever increasing spirituality. The path to enlightenment is long, and many spiritual people believe that successive reincarnations on Earth are necessary to enable our souls to experience and learn so that we may achieve this blissful state in the afterlife. This requires that we must experience a series of metamorphoses through spiritual and material incarnations.

We are all familiar with dramatic examples of metamorphosis in the natural world in the emergence of frogs or toads from tadpoles, of moths and butterflies from caterpillars, of great oak trees from tiny acorns, and more generally the generation of all adult plants and shrubs from seeds, bulbs and tubers. The whole process of evolution as described by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace is a constant living example of metamorphosis.

In 1790 the German writer and philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe published a book entitled *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären (The Metamorphosis of Plants)*. In this work Goethe was seeking an underlying unity in the diversity of plant forms as well as exploring the aesthetic beauty of the plant kingdom. In his book Goethe takes the reader through the vegetative growth process from seed to fully grown plant and illustrates the homology (underlying relationships in form and structure) of plants despite their diversity. The transformation of seeds into adult plants is just one of Nature's spectacular demonstrations of the application of metamorphosis.

Geologists too utilise the concept of metamorphosis in their description of the changes in the appearance of rocks under the influence of heat and pressure within the Earth's crust, or at even greater depths. Thus granite is transformed into gneiss or schist, with their layered appearance, but the essential constituent minerals – quartz, mica and feldspar – remain. In a similar way, shale becomes slate and chalk, or limestone is transformed into marble; these are therefore described as metamorphic rocks.

On an even grander scale, this idea of the evolution or metamorphosis of the created world was expressed in the 20th century by the French scientist-priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. He described four stages of evolution of the world as a whole. First there was what he called geogenesis – the creation of the physical Earth; followed by biogenesis – the emergence of life on Earth; psychogenesis – the development of thinking beings; and thence noogenesis – our awareness of our spiritual origins and acceptance that this was the realm to which we all return on mortal death. It was Teilhard's belief that humankind was gradually evolving spiritually towards an Omega Point at which we recognise ourselves as essentially spiritual beings and part of the Divine.

Right at the start of the twentieth century an English-born Canadian psychiatrist and physician, Richard Maurice Bucke, suggested in his book *Cosmic Consciousness* that the human mind has developed through four stages. He defined these stages as the perceptual mind – the mind of animals capable of sense impressions; a mind of conceptual awareness as we find

in the growing child; the self-conscious mind where the child becomes aware of himself or herself as an individual; and the intuitional mind where we are capable of creating great works of art, music and literature, and communing with the soul of the artisan to derive inspiration from his or her creations. This fourth stage of our development is also that phase of life when we are aware that, as Bucke puts it in his 1879 book *Man's Moral Nature*, 'All things, man included, are part of one great whole'. In other words, there is a creative, spiritual source for all things of which we are a part and which many people on Earth regard as deity.

Perhaps the most dramatic examples of metamorphosis – and certainly the most relevant to us – are to be found in the creation and transformation of human beings. There are two stages of metamorphosis in the human earthly life cycle. First, there is the creation of a living being from the sperm and ovum into a zygote and thence into an embryo to form a living human being. The human body serves during earthly life as the carrier for our spiritual being or soul. But at the other end of the life scale there is also the metamorphosis of the human physical form back into a spiritual being at mortal death. According to the Californian Professor of Religious Philosophy, Stafford Betty, quoting Rumi in his latest book, you do not become any less by dying but are simply transformed from one state to another.

You always are and you always will be,
There is no time when you were not,
And there will be no time when you are not.
Bhagavad Gita

To use a simple scientific analogy, the concept of metamorphosis is like the transformation of ice into water and thence into vapour or steam. It is the same mass of water, assuming a different form. The processes are also reversible; we also pass from mortal into spiritual form and can, if we wish, reincarnate to dwell on Earth once more. All physical (as opposed to chemical) changes provide us with examples of metamorphosis. The constituent molecules of the human body change constantly throughout life; we may undergo organ transplants or have the misfortune to lose limbs but what we acknowledge as our 'self' remains the same.

In literature, the Roman poet Ovid reworked a collection of Greek myths and legends into his work *Metamorphoses*. Here, the first Book recounts the transformation of chaos into the ordered world, while the remaining stories tell of men and women who become trees, animals, stones or stars. Many of these tales have become part of everyday social dialogue, and are the inspiration, directly or indirectly, for aesthetic creations. In music for instance, Benjamin Britten composed his Six Metamorphoses after Ovid (Op. 49) as a piece of programme music for solo oboe; in literature the concept of 'shape-shifting' has become quite a common idea in modern science fiction. [In shamanism this is of course an ancient idea.]

Dante makes explicit use of Ovid's theme in his *Divine Comedy* where, in Part Three, *Inferno*, wrongdoers suffer punishment and experience redemption – a transformation for the better in their lives. Ovid's work may rightly be regarded as the inspiration for this idea in Dante. In *Don Quixote*, Cervantes encourages his readers to explore various possibilities for directions their life could take after their worldly experiences. Franz Kafka wrote his novella *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*, 1915) most probably as an expression of his transformation

in personality on leaving his parents' home – an experience familiar to us all. But the transformation from human form into a huge insect (variously translated as a beetle or cockroach) is of similar bizarre character to the changes described by Ovid. In Kafka's interpretation, the concept is overlaid with a certain metaphysical connotation by his description of the 'new' Gregor Samsa as '*ein ungeheuer Ungeziefer*', which translates as something like 'monstrous creature', but both the adjective and noun are rendered by vague but negative terms (denoted by the use of the prefix 'un-').

This theme of fundamental change within the soul of an individual, or redesign of a city, has provided inspiration to many composers. Richard Strauss composed his *Metamorphosen* in memory of German culture destroyed by the Nazis and as a tribute to Munich where Strauss was born. Here in a river of sound created by twenty-three solo strings is a representation of the rebirth of Munich and of the German culture that ushered in the Age of Romanticism.

On a similar theme Strauss wrote *Tod und Verklärung* (*Death and Transfiguration*) about a man on his death-bed recalling his past life – the innocent days of childhood, his love affairs, and the unfulfilled ambitions of his professional life – but looking forward to achieving these goals in the transformation of the afterlife.

There are numerous examples of 'spiritual awakening' through near-death experiences (NDEs) and out-of-body experiences (OBEs). These events have often been described by people with no religious affiliation and no belief in an afterlife, soul or any psychic experience – which makes them far more credible! There are now many books recounting these experiences (see References below). One historically significant account is that given by a young soldier in the U.S. Medical Corps, Dr George Richie. In 1943 he became ill with double pneumonia and 'died'. In his book he describes how his spirit stood at his bedside while doctors pronounced him dead. Fortunately he was revived after several minutes of resuscitation and his account of his own NDE inspired both Dr Raymond Moody and Dr Pim van Lommel to undertake their own studies of NDEs. Several Hollywood stars – Shirley MacLaine, Peter Sellers, and Elizabeth Taylor for example – have also described their OBEs.

Nor are these accounts only relatively recent. Plato (*fl. ca. 400 BCE*) recounts the tale of Er in his dialogue *Republic*: Er awoke on his funeral pyre and described his journey into the afterlife. Plutarch (*fl. ca. 1st century CE*) related the story of Thespesius of Soli who died after receiving a blow to the head but revived during his funeral three days later. The Venerable Bede in the 8th Century described something similar in his account of a Northumbrian man called Cunningham or Drythelm, recorded in his history of the English-speaking people. French anthropologist Dr Phillipe Charlier found a report from a French physician Pierre-Jean du Monchaux in 1740 of a patient experiencing an NDE while unconscious.

Spiritual healing – especially for those cases where the healer is aware of the spiritual source of his or her power – provides many more examples of the existence of an afterlife realm populated by transformed or metamorphosed individuals. Necessarily, changes in the state of the soul that can bring about these effects also demonstrate the beneficence of those souls in the spiritual world who have the power to produce earthly transformations. Fine examples of direct contact between healer and spirit are provided by the work of George Chapman and

Mrs Leah Doctors, described respectively in two books by J. Bernard Hutton. In the first, Hutton described the healing brought about by a British surgeon in spirit, William Lang, communing with Chapman. Records confirm that Lang was an ophthalmic surgeon who practised at London's Middlesex Hospital until 1914. Leah Doctors was guided by another discarnate medical practitioner, a Chinese surgeon Dr Fu Lin Chang who lived in the 15th century. Examples such as these provide verifiable evidence of metamorphoses of living beings into spirit. It is also reassuring to read of their ongoing participation in the affairs of the mortal world.

To sum up: I have shown that the idea of metamorphosis pervades many aspects of life, scientific and spiritual. It will also be apparent that I have discussed two kinds of metamorphosis – literal or physical, and descriptive or spiritual. Tadpoles, caterpillars, granite and limestone give us examples of the first kind which result in physical changes in the appearance of the object or being. Ideas of our ongoing spiritual development suggested by philosophers like Bucke and Teilhard provide examples of the second interpretation of metamorphosis. Our birth and mortal death belong to the first class: the human example of our metamorphosis during earthly life is, or should be, the very foundation of the way we live. To be aware of and to absorb into our psyche the concept of metamorphosis as the principle of our life path reassures us that our soul is always a part of the divine Spirit. We may not live again on Earth but we will certainly exist for eternity in Spirit.

Dr Howard Jones

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Women's March London 21st Jan 2017

This account of the Women's March, as well as being both a report and an experience, is overtly political in places, and might be felt by some readers to exceed the remit of De Numine. But in the context of the Perennial Question, this seems to me to be an example of 'doing something about it': action following on the 'still small voice' from within which is surely from Spirit. Ed.

The Perennial Question: 'What is it all about and what should we be doing about it?'

Story, Symbol and Spiritual Activism

Farage, Brexit and now Donald Trump as President! I was reeling from reading articles and news from every perspective – an attempt to understand what was happening and why? More importantly, to discern where and how to align myself? My activist days, living in London over thirty years ago, came surging back ... Women's rights ... anti-racism marches ... standing in front of the police horses to protect the striking miners ... camping at Greenham Common against cruise missiles ... Gay Pride marches ... a commitment to interfaith dialogue and my own calling to serve the Sacred Feminine ... storytelling at sacred Goddess sites and, more recently, creating a festival to bring together a divided community through a new and ancient story of dragons.

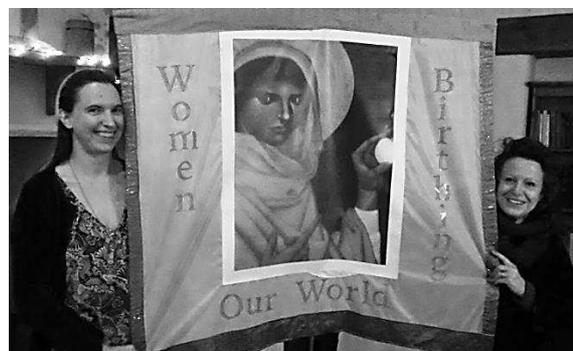
Through the current dismay and confusion, I hear a calm, truth-speaking Inner Voice: 'Everything I have stood for all my life is under threat.' Pulled out of the confusion, from the

midst of shock, despair, rage and grief – I was called into action, with thousands of other women, to join the Women’s March, to gather with them at the US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, 12 noon on the 21st. All I knew was that I had to be there. An imperative of the soul. To go as what? To do what? I didn’t know – just be there ... carrying a banner.

My unique banner. My unique contribution. My sacred offering ... what image, what words were to be declared on my offering? I set to work, and the creation of the banner was the beginning of my recovery from the shock of the US election, from Brexit, from the tide of intolerance that appeared to be sweeping across the world. I had seen the picture in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, on a visit last autumn. A plaque explained it had arrived to mark the ordination of the first woman bishop. I had loved the picture immediately and so I asked my husband to take a photograph; it shows a dark skinned woman, middle-eastern looking, in a red cloak, with gold aura against a dark background. She holds a white egg in one hand, looking at the viewer clearly and directly whilst gesturing to the egg with a graceful dark finger from the other. She is Mary Magdalene.

The picture illustrates a story about Mary Magdalene and Tiberius, Emperor of Rome. She was preaching the resurrection to him, and he had scoffed and said ‘The resurrection is no more true than that those white eggs on my table will turn red.’ The story tells how she lifted up an egg ... and it turned deep, dark red. So this picture, this moment in the story, is promise of a turning ... an indication that there will be proof of a rebirth, a resurrection. It seemed perfect for my purpose.

Three women friends joined me to place this image of Mary Magdalene, greatly enlarged, onto a silky white and gold banner. It was an atmosphere of creative collaboration, fun and sharing stories. Each offered a vital component ... sharp scissors, a sewing machine, patience and care to detail. Red lettering was placed around our central image ‘Women Birthing Our World.’ I held up Mary Magdalene, Holder of the Egg, high on a central pole; our banner was beautiful.



The March

There was quiet excitement on the train as it neared London ... women carried poles, placards tucked in plastic carrier bags, all chatting happily. Many of them were decades younger than myself. I felt a glow of pleasure at this next generation carrying the baton. I caught scraps of conversation: ‘My dad was a bit cynical when I told him I was coming, but I told him that it isn’t fair that the men at work earn more than me for the same job.’ said a bright, fresh faced twenty something. Women, men and children came for diverse personal reasons, but the unifying spirit was to protect human rights with justice, peace, equality and freedom, interlaced with humour and irony. Lots of pink ‘pussy’ hats ...

An American couple: 'I'm a Nasty Woman with A Bad Hombre' and 'I'm a Bad Hombre with a Nasty Woman'

A polite Brit: 'I'm a bit cross, this sort of thing must end'

A woman around my age: 'I cant believe I still have to protest at this s**t.'

A mother: 'A World for my daughter and my daughter's daughter'. Her young daughter next to her: 'Brave Little Girl'

Woman dressed as 'Statue of Taking Liberties'

A large size Obama: 'Can America be kind again?'

Several 'Love Trumps Hate', and 'Choose Love', and 'Dump Trump'

Loads of Socialist Workers: 'Anti-war-Anti-racism'

Amnesty International: 'Come together Against Hate'

Pride of London with pictures of famous gay women – Maya Angelou ...

A chant: 'No fear, no hate, I will be Compassionate'

'I won't be Bullied by someone who is Orange'

A person-size large fluffy duck: 'My name id Donald and I'm orange too'

The sun shone on Grosvenor Square as I unfurled our beautiful Dark Mary and held her high. The white and gold of her banner glistened beneath the golden eagle and stars and stripes of the fluttering flag over the USA embassy. Helicopters hovered in the blue sky to monitor the gathering throngs. Down below a chap on a bicycle whose pedalling powered his trailer with speakers for loud funky music to keep us smiling, and sometimes dancing; the London Political Choir (mostly white haired and glowing faced women) sang 'Bread and Roses' and 'Build Bridges not Walls'.

I have never seen, or been at such a huge gathering (later estimated at around one hundred thousand people). There was little formal organisation, we couldn't hear the speakers and it didn't matter! There was solidarity, shared humanity, humour and determination as we walked down Park Lane, round Piccadilly, on to Trafalgar Square; so many magic and magnificent moments. People stood on the pavements, watching, holding placards up to support and encourage us.

This was more than magic moments, this was a movement, rising up spontaneously because we all knew it needed to – led by women in response to a man who had been heard bragging about abusing women ... who deplored women having a right to choice over their own bodies, and who spoke in 'post truth' lies to create fear and enemies with seemingly war-mongering intent ... I became aware of the challenge of my mission to bear my banner beautifully in the sometimes fearsome windy cross currents. (I now understood why most people had a small cardboard banner on a thick stick!) Mine was larger and higher, in billowing parachute material on a slim bending bamboo pole. I had to stop twice as the pole shook hard – threatening to snap with the force of the prevailing wind. The third time I anticipated the challenge, breathed deep with the wind and took only a moment to counter



the opposing force and move on through, with determination, joy and lightness. I felt truly blessed to be part of this uprising and privileged to bear the Egg of the Promise of Resurrection.

There were no arrests. Not one. There was no violence. None. There was colour, fun, strength and defiance. There were also five hundred thousand women and men in Washington, hundreds of thousands in gatherings all over America and other parts of the world – Kenya, Denmark, Australia – around three million altogether. This wasn't the end, of course, it was a gulp of air from swimming in the stormy sea. President Trump and his men immediately cancelled payment to Planned Parenthood (giving advice, contraception and fertility information and support to women in the poorest countries). He banned travel from mostly Muslim countries. He tries to silence news – accusing journalists of lying as he tells his 'alternative facts'. He provokes enmity whenever he speaks and still threatens to build walls between nations.

But the egg began to turn. First a palest pink – a Danish woman politician took on the task of raising the money for Planned Parenthood to continue, and donations have poured in. A deeper shade of pink as brave and committed lawyers have succeeded in getting the travel ban at least temporarily stopped ... people are sharing the true facts through social media. I have joined Amnesty International, donated to independent journalism and activist campaigners. The best of humanity is called for, within us and around us, to respond to the worst within us and around us. In my case, facing my own fear ... As if my values can be destroyed by anyone? As if my own meaning and purpose for life can be under threat by anyone? As if my love of Beauty and Truth and Justice can be damaged?

Thirty years ago I was an activist challenging outer world injustices. Now I am challenged to face what is within me so I respond to outer world injustices fearlessly with a fierce and protecting love. A new Inner Voice speaks: 'Everything I have stood for all my life is still safely inside me and so very much stronger now.'

My egg has turned red. I will add a drop of blood colour to the Magdalene's promise, and her truth-telling of Resurrection.

Pamela Gaunt



Members Day 15th October 2016

Taming the Spirit: Religion versus Religious Experience?

A summary of the Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture delivered by Professor Jeff Astley, Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience

Religion's Criticisms of Religious Experience

(1) Friedrich Schleiermacher argued for *the experiential origin of religion and the secondary status of its theology and doctrines* (religion was 'essentially an intuition and a feeling' and dogmas were not part of religion but 'derived from it'). His critics contend that such a position displaces the authority of divine revelation. 'For Schleiermacher proclaiming God means proclaiming one's own piety' (Karl Barth). In an early review of the work of Alister Hardy and the Religious Experience Research Unit, Simon Tugwell asserted that an 'anti-doctrinal, emotional picture of religion' leaves no room for 'any truth which can fascinate and fulfil the mind'.

One weakness in the Barthian move to elevate divine revelation far above religious experience is that revelation is presented in Scripture and elsewhere as arising *in* some sort of human experience, often analogous to a 'hearing' ('The word of the LORD came to me, saying ...') or occasionally a 'seeing'. Indeed, revelation can logically only take place through human experience: revelation is 'nothing apart from human apprehension of it' (Kathryn Tanner).

I am more sympathetic to Tugwell's claim that most religious experience does not arrive naked, but clothed in concepts. While still a contended position, current debate largely endorses Steven Katz's claim that 'there are no pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences'.

To call an experience 'religious' or 'spiritual', and certainly to call it an experience *of God*, involves our having learned these concepts independently of the experience. Basil Mitchell's analogy remains helpful. The officer of the watch peers through the dark and stormy night and reports seeing a lighthouse. The navigating officer peers at his charts and says that this is impossible. Shortly, a lookout reports seeing land, then more land on another bearing. A 'cumulative case' builds up; possibly the navigating officer's sums are wrong. But whether the first 'sighting' was a real seeing of a lighthouse or not must depend on what Mitchell calls 'some overall appraisal of the situation'. The concept of lighthouses, what they are and where they are located, must form part of that appraisal. Similarly, whether religious or spiritual experience is an experience of some sort of transcendent reality cannot solely be judged by the fact that someone undergoes that experience. Experiences are not 'self-authenticating' in that sense. Which is why what philosophers and theologians say may be highly relevant to claims to religious experience.

In 1273, Thomas Aquinas received a mystical vision and gave up work on his massive *Summa Theologiae*, insisting that by comparison with what he had briefly glimpsed, 'All that I have hitherto written seems to me nothing but straw'. Does that mean, however, that we may ignore his earlier arguments and insights? I do not want to dismiss religious experience, but I don't really want to deny truth-claims based on reflective, systematic, dogmatic or speculative theology either. Is there room for both?

(2) The approach that prioritises religious experience is almost invariably associated with a striking *emphasis provisionality in religious belief*. Liberal Christian theology stands in marked contrast to 'theologies of obedience' that underplay the role of human experience, and the more extreme, fundamentalist accounts that believe that God has immunised divine revelation from human error. According to Ian Ramsey, 'What is authoritative is that of which we are aware – that which is given in the disclosure. But our talk of this is never in the same way given', and must be tested for 'empirical fit' against a whole lifetime's experience.

(3) This sort of theological liberalism sits easily with a *democratic openness to spiritual experiences* that may come to anyone, through any situation. The great diversity of such experiences has been criticised for its tendency to disrupt attempts to fix the limits of theology. However, Christian doctrine ('teachings') already comprehends an ample range of positions. I regard this diversity as a positive thing and do not view religious experience as suspect just because of its variety. And that religious experiences are also *common* should not dispose religious practitioners and believers to disapprove of them.

(4) Does *concentrating on spiritual and religious experience result in a narrow view of religion*? Another early critic, the Greek Orthodox theologian Kallistos Ware, maintained that 'religious experience in a wider sense, as something which extends through their whole life' is 'really more important than any single experience', any 'particular incidents'.

Alister Hardy's taxonomy in *The Spiritual Nature of Man* includes enduring, extended experiences within some of his largest sub-categories: e.g. the 'sense of security, protection, peace' and 'joy, happiness and well-being'; and consequential changes in a 'sense of purpose or new meaning to life' and in 'attitude to others'. When people (correctly) argue that there is more to religion than religious experience, we may point to these elements. And in his 1971 appeal, Hardy claimed that he wanted 'accounts of ... seemingly more ordinary but deeply felt experiences' rather than the merely 'remarkable' or 'strange and striking', and those of a 'continuing sense of spiritual awareness' just as much as 'the more dramatic experiences'.

(5) What of *the issue of religious novelty*? Religions are wary that new experiences may disrupt traditional religious thinking. But the Church needs to be more honest about the many ways in which Christianity has from the outset continually changed. The development of Christian belief has been a recurrent concern, especially when understood as part of God's *continuing* inspiration and revelation, which produces creative insights that enable the records of Christianity's 'original events or words to be read in a new way' (David Brown). Religious experience was never the most disruptive ingredient in causing such changes.

The Positive Effect of Religious Experience

I turn now to one area where I believe there is more kinship and affinity between religion and religious experience, drawing on an aspect of the work of Wesley Wildman, a philosopher of religion who also studies the neurology of religious experience. In his magisterial *Religious and Spiritual Experiences* (2011), Wildman considers what he calls 'intense experiences'. Intense in both their depth and breadth, these are described as a subset of 'existentially significant experiences which engage us with our ultimate concerns'. Among other distinguishing factors, they 'leverage significant personal or social effects' that help people successfully to live their lives, both for themselves and for others. It is these effects on which I wish to focus.

Beliefs 'work' for us in many different ways, but spiritual, ethical and religious beliefs primarily work by expressing and evoking the attitudes, values and dispositions by which we

live and flourish, and in which we may dare to die. They help us to triumph over and live under the troubles of this mortal life; to value and rejoice in its blessings; and (we hope) eventually to face our end without resentment or despair.

So I am minded to follow Wildman in judging the meaning and value of spiritual and religious experiences more in terms of their effects than their presumed causes (even though, unlike Wildman, I believe that many of them do have a personal transcendent cause.) He writes: 'This is a case of "by their fruits you shall know them" – no matter how [religious and spiritual experiences] come to us, what they produce in our lives and in wider social contexts is what matters most.' 'We find meaning in [these experiences] not because of what they supposedly reveal about other spiritual worlds but because they open to us the value-laden depths of this world.'

Similar views may be found in William James' 'pragmatic way of taking religion', and Alister Hardy's endorsement of Emile Durkheim's view that the real function of religion for the believer 'is not to make us think, to enrich our knowledge ... but, rather, it is to make us act, to aid us to live'.

While philosophy and theology may properly debate the abstract claims of metaphysics and the structure of the Godhead, *religions* have a spiritual focus – if spirituality is defined by its concern for human re-formation and the perceived ultimate meanings and values by which people live. Religion has priority over all its theologies, and salvation/liberation and spirituality is what makes the religions *religious*.

I conclude with some relevant points.

(1) On the whole, *spiritual and religious experiences are individual and intensely personal*. Experiences are something that people can only undergo for themselves; others cannot always appreciate them (as Rudolf Otto insisted, prefacing his account of numinous experience with the caveat that 'whoever knows no such moments [of deeply-felt religious experience] ... is requested to read no further').

It is the personal and private nature of religious experience that frequently seems to give it its transformative power. It has the potential to change *you* because it happens to *you*, and that is a gift – a grace that you have received and I, perhaps, have not. That some religious experiences appear to be triggered by depression, despair or other suffering may suggest that they happen where and when (and because?) they are needed.

(2) *If religious experience is primarily therapeutic, we may be misleading ourselves by concentrating on its noetic, cognitive outcomes*. Most examples of religious experience offer little more than a glimpse or whisper of the Mysterious Other. Perhaps there is little to be known or inferred from religious experience about this reality?

Consider an analogy. The crying child who awakens frightened in the dark and is comforted by his mother, knows that she is there. The encounter does not give him the information to reconstruct the rest of her movements, thoughts or hopes, or the other values she holds and the other commitments that she takes seriously; let alone her origin, history, or her biochemical or financial character. This disclosure is bestowed on the child on a strict need to know basis. She meets his need. It is revelation enough that she is the one who has come.

I think of religious experiences rather like that. We shouldn't expect to learn too much from them. Very often what people 'get out of them' is something more personal than knowledge. Love, perhaps?

(3) 'Ordinary theology' is my term for the rather unsystematic, but vividly autobiographical, affect-laden and figurative talk about God in which most Christians, and many others, engage. Academic theology in part arises out of this ordinary theology, but is a lot less prevalent.

When people respond to religious experiences, they usually do so in personal ordinary theology. But we should not think that this can replace the more well-honed, carefully and critically thought-through theological beliefs of the academy, or of ecclesiastical doctrine. These other discourses work at a different level and do different things. By contrast, first-hand accounts provide little by way of explanation, defence or nuanced representation of religious experience. Rather, they represent its first and most original and vibrant *voice*.

(4) *Who are the fruits for?* Fruits may be personal, something 'for' and 'in' us; but as the metaphor itself suggests, they should mainly be for others. Trees do not feed on their own fruits; in giving them away they nourish life in other beings. Paradigmatically, they create the new life of a new tree.

In his Corinthian correspondence Paul writes of *charismata*, 'spiritual gifts'. Some are related to religious experiences, some provide gifts to others through healings and miracles. Paul claims these charismata for himself, in spades. Not only does he 'speak in tongues more than all of you', he also writes of someone (scholars assume he means himself) who 'was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told'. Yet he will not boast of these experiences, even though his Christian faith and life seems to have originated in an experience of the risen Christ.

For however powerful these gifts may be, even 'if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries', if he does not have love 'I am nothing'. So I recruit Paul to support my claim that religious experience cannot just be a personal therapy, a fulfilment or deepening of our psychology, spirituality or piety. Its fruits must also fall beyond the tree; giving rise to other-regarding attitudes and their expression in acts of sympathy, benevolence, kindness, unselfishness.

I am reluctant to claim that the spiritual and moral fruits of religious experience validate the veracity or objectivity of religious experience. But I am willing to say that they are appropriate *moral and spiritual tests* of it. That is to say, we are justified in evaluating religious experiences positively if they have effects that we judge to be good in spiritual terms (for their good effects on the person who has them), and in moral terms (for their good effects on others). In these senses, they are (morally, spiritually, religiously) 'authentic'.

And there is one fruit that I consider to have special value: a change in *the way people see things*. Simone Weil wrote, 'If I light an electric torch ... I do not judge its power by looking at the bulb, but by seeing how many objects it lights up'. In the same way, she argued, a spiritual way of life is to be assessed 'by the amount of light thrown upon the things of this world'. Christian theologians who fear that foregrounding particular and unusual experiences may lead to our underrating more everyday and continuous Christian experiences, might be thinking of the latter in terms of people seeing their lives, other people, history and the natural world in a particular light.

Individual religious perceptions can evoke, form and sustain this more general kind of religious awareness by engendering attitudes, feelings and values that determine how and how and what we see: our spiritual and moral 'perspective', our 'point of view'. And why does that matter? Because it *constitutes* 'mattering'. It determines what – and who – we value and take seriously, and therefore how we live our lives. And that sort of seeing *is* ultimately *salvific*, insofar as it gives strength and healing to our souls, and enables us to reach out and bestow these same fruits on a world that desperately needs this nourishment.

Professor Jeff Astley

Afternoon Discussion

Report by Marianne Rankin, AHT Director of Communications

The afternoon discussion on Members Day picked up a theme introduced by John Franklin some time ago, which has also been a focus for correspondence in *De Numine*. Many years ago, John had been asked by AHS member Joan Ashford:

What have we learned from our study of Religious and Spiritual Experience and what we should be doing about it?

Everyone had given a great deal of thought to the questions, which were to be discussed by a panel of members and then opened up to the floor for general discussion. This led to a well-focused and enlightening afternoon. The panel was chaired by **Tristram Jenkins**, former Vice Chair of the Society. The Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience, **Professor Jeff Astley**, who had delivered the annual Alister Hardy Lecture in the morning, was joined on the panel by the Chair of the Oxford Group, **Tanya Garland**; her predecessor **Rhonda Riachi** and AHT Webmaster **Mike Rush**. Each began by offering their own response to the questions before the discussion was taken forward.

Tanya Garland, who had worked for the RERU in Oxford in the early years, began by suggesting that

1. These experiences are fairly common even if not spoken about openly.
2. They are not restricted to the religious or to any one religion.
3. They are not experienced only by those who believe in a spiritual reality or religion.
4. They are the same experiences as described in the holy scriptures of all the world religions: visionary; auditory, such as hearing a voice guiding or protecting or the hearing a choir or music; tactile experiences such as feeling a comforting hand on the shoulder, a kiss or some other touch; or olfactory – smelling the perfume of flowers or a personal smell such as the tobacco of someone who has passed.
5. The variety of these experiences is also extended to an inner knowing, or a feeling of joy, or unexpected peace, or a sense that one just must do a particular act such as calling someone.

She said that she had become more certain of the power of prayer and the power and consequences of our thoughts. As a result she felt the need to attempt to control and stop

negative, aggressive or destructive thinking. Tanya had also learned that people are able to raise their level of consciousness spiritually, thereby becoming open to the experience of the deceased or of a spiritual master guide such as Jesus. In her view, such experiences leave the person convinced of life after death in a spirit form.

Therefore, to answer the question, 'What should we be doing about it?' Tanya felt that, personally, she should be committing herself to spiritual ways of living as prescribed biblically – love your God and your neighbour; live honestly and with integrity, and try to progress as a spiritual being and to connect to God. However she also felt that one should tell others who want to know what truth one has found, and to be a witness to it by how one lives and what one's priorities are seen to be.

Mike Rush had thought of creating a time-line, featuring some of the key ideas and research in the study of religious and spiritual experience similar to one used in the history of science. His suggestions for iconic figures and their work who might feature in this time-line included William James, Sir Alister Hardy, and Raymond Moody; also people inspired by spiritual experiences such as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Dame Cicely Saunders, the Dalai Lama, and Nelson Mandela. In addition, Mike considered Carl Jung's concepts of the Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, the work on the neuroscience of religious experience by Eugene d'Aquili & Andrew Newberg, and the work of transpersonal psychologists such as Stan and Christina Grof who explored spiritual experiences in relation to mental health and personal transformation.

When he began the MA in Religious Experience at Lampeter in 2002, and joined the Alister Hardy Society, Mike had already been interested in the big questions such as: Does God exist? Is there life after death? Can consciousness exist beyond the brain? Are psychic abilities real? Is there a common core to mystical experience? Is there a Perennial Wisdom Tradition? After about 14 years of study, Mike felt that as he still did not know the answer to any of those questions, he would turn his attention to questions where he could realistically expect to find answers, such as 'what meaning and effect do these experiences have on us in this life, rather than the next?'

Mike is currently training as a therapist, supporting the work of the Spiritual Crisis Network (SCN) which helps people who are distressed or overwhelmed by their spiritual experiences. This is an attempt to ground his academic pursuits in something worthwhile and socially constructive. Mike feels that the question we are responding to doesn't necessarily require a consensus but rather invites us all to contribute our own individual answer, one relevant to us, our lives, and those around us.

As for the future of the AHT, he suggests that perhaps we should look at how spirituality is reflected in society today. Certain topics seem to be in vogue or socially relevant at this time, especially with younger people. For example, the interface between mental health and spirituality already mentioned, but also topics like neuroscience and psychedelics. There is so much going on both in popular culture, and in different academic forums, that demonstrates the perennial, innately spiritual nature of men and women!

Rhonda Riachi explained that what she has learned could be roughly grouped into five areas:

- a) Love and wisdom: these are recurring themes in all spiritual writings and they feature widely in NDEs. Love and wisdom are the things we can take with us when we go!
- b) Belonging and individuality: a stronger sense of belonging to the whole human race and to God, and of how our personalities manifest in each life here on earth.
- c) Meaning and purpose: spiritual experiences help to give meaning to life, and each life has a purpose in a greater scheme that we can only guess at on this plane of existence. Past-life regression experiences and some NDEs describe the choices we make before we arrive on earth.
- d) Anything is possible: reality is moulded by thought, not the other way round, and we need to keep this in mind at all times and use our thoughts wisely. (Positive psychology uses this principle but under a different guise.)
- e) A new paradigm of spirit and matter: it is clear that we need a new paradigm (perhaps a new metaphysics) to integrate our learning about spirituality and the role that matter plays in our lives. The prevailing materialist paradigm is well past its sell-by date.

For Rhonda, learning about spiritual experiences has also brought her the following gifts: hope, joy, gratitude, humility and light.

In answer to 'What should we be doing about it?' Rhonda says, 'The AHT should focus on whatever is needed by the members and whatever will help us to share the gifts with others. It may not always be lectures or events – there are other activities we could pursue. To cater for these needs I think we could well use a saying I read on Twitter recently: "Be bold, be brave, be creative."'

Jeff Astley referred to the RERC archive as a large body of personal testimony to people's spiritual experience, which provides an important pointer or even witness to another spiritual realm. He suggested that it might be viewed as a testament to what John Hick called 'a fifth dimension of our nature which enables us to respond to a fifth dimension of the universe ... the ultimate reality that underlies, interpenetrates and transcends the physical universe' (Hick, J., *The Fifth Dimension: an exploration of the spiritual realm*, 1999).

He stressed that it is therefore important to maintain and continually expand resources like the archive and to make it more widely and helpfully available to academics and others who have an interest in the study of this field. Jeff explained that he had learned a lot more in his studies of the reports of spiritual experience about its human pole (people's 'fifth dimension') than about the ultimate nature of its transcendent pole (the 'fifth dimension of the universe'): more about their spiritual and religious responses than about whatever they believe has caused those experiences; i.e. more about them than about their God.

He felt that possibly the most significant practical and human feature of these experiences lies in their spiritual, therapeutic and action-directed effects – their 'fruits'. They have been salvic for very many people, and through them there have often been transformative effects for others also: there is a pastoral resource here which can help to heal people's souls, and help them to make life better for those whose lives they touch. Jeff suggested that perhaps we

should be more willing to encourage people to be open to spiritual experiences, if it means that they are likely to make themselves open to the source of these good effects.

The discussion was then opened to the floor and a range of responses to the questions was expressed, which are not recorded here. People may wish to continue the discussion in *De Numine*.

It was a lively afternoon and highlighted the thoughtfulness and wide-ranging interests of AHT members, who had all considered the questions deeply. Each of us has our own individual response, reflected in the choices we make in life and the values by which we live. The AHT holds a precious record of people's deepest and most intense experiences and we have a duty to maintain and treasure our archive, as well as to make our work better known *through* our publications and events.

Many thanks to all who participated in the discussion, which certainly offered us all much food for thought.

Marianne Rankin

Next year's Members Day:

This will be held in Oxford on 14th October – see Events, page 55.



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Alister Hardy Trust

**held at 12 noon on Monday 7th November 2016 in the the De Bermingham Room,
St Martins in the Bullring, Birmingham B5 5BB**

Present:

Jeff Astley, Sarah Boss, June Boyce-Tillman, Andy Burns, Leslie Francis (Chair), John Franklin, Mark Fox, David Greenwood (Treasurer), Tristram Jenkins, Marianne Rankin, Barrie Rowson, Andrew Village (Secretary).

1. Apologies for Absence:

John D Brown, Neil Hancox, Ursula King, Jeff Leonardi, Chris Lewis, Mike Perks, Jennifer Radford, Rowena Rudkin, Mike Rush, Bettina E. Schmidt, David Voas, Jane Winship.

2. Minutes of the final AGM of the AHSSSE

The minutes of the final AGM of the AHSSSE were accepted.

3. Report from the Chair (tabled)

The Chair gave a report of the previous year's work of the Trust.

Question: Why was Warwick chosen as a host University? The Chair reported that the transfer of the Alister Hardy Professor to Warwick University was a recognition of that institution's commitment to psychology and religion, and its capacity to attract funding. Professor Astley will renew his contract with the Trust, but he will be based at Warwick, not Glyndŵr.

4. Report from the Director of Communications (tabled)

Marianne Rankin is in touch with a range of organisations, attends events and distributes AHT literature. She also talks on the work of the AHT at quiet days. These are chances for people to talk of spiritual experiences, and hear of the work of the Trust.

Marianne Rankin works with David Greenwood on visits to Lampeter, and with Andy Burns on events.

The AH leaflet has been updated – please use new versions. Facebook and the AHT website working well – expansion in this work is to be expected.

Items not in report: The recent Members Day was attended by 8 helpers and 20 others. This was a wonderful day, with an inspiring lecture from Professor Jeff Astley, who joined the panel in the afternoon. Members focused on the question 'What have we learnt from our study of religious and spiritual experience, and what should we be doing about it?' This question, first raised by John Franklin in the pages of *De Numine* (Issue no 60) engendered a very useful discussion. Marianne Rankin will write up discussion for *De Numine* [See report above].

Question: Is the Interdisciplinary Centre for Religious Experience Buckingham University an AHT centre? No it is not formally linked; the link is informal via Marianne Rankin, who keeps the issue on the agenda. It is good to keep contact and look out for possible synergies.

Question: Are we going to set up a formal network and process for application for Centres to become associated with the AHT? Can students at Buckingham (or Winchester) be linked with the AHT? (Matter referred to Trustees).

5. Report from the Director (RERC) Lampeter (tabled)

Day conference July was an important and successful meeting.

Two books have been published this year. On-line Journal of Study of Religious Experience is now up and running. Bettina Schmidt wants to stand down as editor, so there is the need to find a replacement.

Question: The report mentions that there is 'Someone in the [centre] office *nearly* every day' ... is making contact a problem? David Greenwood clarified the situation by stating that there are two part-time workers in the centre. Thursday is not covered but there is an answerphone. David Greenwood requested that the answerphone be checked. Emails usually receive a reply within a day or so.

Question: Could Trustees fund the editing of the journal? (Matter referred to Trustees).

6. Report from the Director (RERC) Glyndŵr (tabled)

Publications – a special issue of *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* on religious experience is due in December and more papers for other peer-reviewed journals are published or in press.

Professor Lewis' work in Russia is a study of religion and religious diversity among 13-15 year olds. Questions in the study include some on spirituality and religious experience.

AH Centre in Glyndŵr has made a case for spirituality and religious experience to appear in the undergraduate and taught postgraduate curricula.

Question: Can reports come in advance in future? (Secretary to request this for next year).

7. Treasurer's Report and Trust's statement of accounts for the year ended 31st July 2016 (circulated)

David Greenwood noted that legacies have enabled a big increase in the work of the Trust over the last few years. The Chair thanked the Treasurer for his careful and vital work during the year, which was greatly appreciated by the Trust and members. Proposed June Boyce-Tillman and seconded Andy Burns, that the accounts and report be received. Passed unanimously.

8. To elect Trustees to serve for the following three years

A letter sent out requesting nominations, of which there was only one: Michael Rush. Duly elected without a vote.

June Boyce-Tillman, John Franklin, David Voas to continue as Trustees.

9. Independent Examiner of the Society's statement of accounts for the forthcoming year

Eryl Jones has been doing this for 10 years. Proposed David Greenwood and seconded Mark Fox, he be asked to continue in this role for next year. Passed unanimously.

10. Voting on resolutions:

(a) To adopt the Rules of the Alister Hardy Trust (2016) (circulated). Proposed Andy Burns and seconded John Franklin. Passed unanimously.

(b) To adopt the Alister Hardy Trust Complaints Procedure (2016) (circulated) [see page 58]. Proposed Andy Burns and seconded Andrew Village. Passed unanimously.

The Chair expressed thanks to Andy Burns for steering those documents through the process, and this was echoed by the meeting.

11. Report from AH Professor (tabled)

Question: What about Glyndŵr students supervised by Professor Jeff Astley? Some will move to Warwick, but others are not affected and will remain with Glyndŵr.

12. Any Other Business

(a) Updates of the membership list. Report was read. There are currently 279 members. Issues raised in the report were referred to the Trustees for action.

(b) Relaunch of the Alister Hardy question. (Matter referred to Trustees).

(c) Members day and relationship to AGM? (Matter referred to Trustees).

13. Next AGM

To be announced after discussion by Trustees.

Chair's report for AGM, 7 November 2016

The past year has marked an important year in the history of the Alister Hardy Trust with the change of legal structure, becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), and with the refocusing of responsibilities for Trustees and for members. That the transition has progressed so smoothly and so effectively is in no small measure due to the strategic and tireless work of Dr David Greenwood (Vice Chair and Treasurer). I want to record my personal thanks to David for his leadership in this matter, and I know that I can record thanks to David on behalf of our fellow Trustees as well. The careful outworking and implementation of the changes have been led by Andy Burns and the establishment of the Membership Action Group, working alongside the Director of Communications. This Group has already organised a one-day joint conference for June 2017 and Members Day for October 2017, and there is a one-day conference for 2018 already in preparation. Special thanks are due to Andy Burns and Marianne Rankin for the time and energy they have devoted to ensuring the success of this Group. All round this has been a busy and active year for Trustees.

The primary work of the Trust resides in research and the dissemination of research in the field of religious and spiritual experience. To this end the Trust has been ably served during the past year by the two Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centres at the University of Wales Trinity St David and at Glyndŵr University. I will not repeat reports of the work of the two Centres as recorded and celebrated by their Directors; but I will record my appreciation for their notable achievements to fulfil the aims of the Trust.

As an additional source of energy for the research agenda of the Trust, Professor Jeff Astley has now completed two years in the (part-time) post as the Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience based at Glyndŵr University. As a result of this work, a reader on the subject of Religious Experience will shortly be published. Furthermore, I understand that Professor Astley's account of his research during this period, captured in the annual Alister Hardy Lecture, was well-received and well-appreciated. The Trustees have extended the (part-time) chair for a further two years and have offered that position to the University of Warwick. This is intended to provide an Alister Hardy research presence within one university in England and two in Wales.

At the last meeting of the Trustees (16 May 2016) I suggested that the primary responsibilities of the Trustees for the next period remain those of consolidating the new ways of working as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, ensuring future streams of income, maintaining a broad set of skills and expertise among the body of Trustees to ensure the effective delivery of the mission of the Trust, and both supporting and monitoring the activities of the Research Centres that are sponsored by the Trust. I record my appreciation to the current Trustees for their effectiveness in these areas. I must also pay a tribute to all the members of the Trust whose support, both financially and in contributing to the life of the Trust, is most welcome and indeed essential. To this end I must mention especially Patricia Murphy who so effectively edits *De Numine*, the journal that links the academic work of the Trust with our broader concerns of dissemination and public engagement.

The Trust moves into the next year with confidence but also with full awareness of the challenges ahead, not least in maintaining income streams.

The Revd Professor Leslie J. Francis

Treasurer's Report for the Alister Hardy Trust for the year ended 31st July 2016

This has been a year of great activity, largely owing to the generous bequests received over the past few years which enabled the Trust to support a number of research initiatives. Just before Christmas 2015 we received with much gratitude the bequest of over £155,000 from the late Mrs. Margaret Fryer, a long standing supporter of the Society and Trust. We are very grateful for legacies as they do provide our main source of income: it is of course sad that we were unable to thank these generous donors when they were alive.

Apart from legacies our main sources of income at the moment are from interest from our investments (£7350) and membership subscription income (£4575). The trust also received £6925 capital appreciation, but of course this can vary according to the state of the market, and could decrease.

I set out below a short summary of the accounts – a full set of accounts will be available at the AGM and on request for those unable to attend and who wish to receive them.

<u>Income</u> (Includes £156,714 bequest from the estate of Mrs. Fryer)	<u>£173,036</u>
Gross Surplus	<u>£172,906</u>
<u>Expenditure</u> (including donation to UWTSO of £19,000, various honoraria, professional fees associated with incorporation and additional expenses associated with increased activity on the part of volunteers and trustees and a donation due to Glyndŵr University of £16,000)	<u>£54,796</u>
<u>Net surplus</u>	<u>£118,110</u>
<u>Fixed Assets:</u> Tangible assets (mainly books and works of art)	<u>£50,110</u>
Current assets (Banks accounts and invested funds)	<u>£446,925</u>
<u>Total assets less current liabilities:</u>	<u>£491,701</u>



Dr David M. Greenwood, Hon. Treasurer and Vice-Chair

RERC Glyndŵr University Director's Report for AGM, 7 November 2016

The work undertaken by the RERC Glyndŵr University during 2016 has been primarily focused on publications and building research capacity.

Firstly, Professor Lewis has concentrated throughout the year on assembling and editing the Special Issue of the journal *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*. This is built on the symposium on religious and spiritual experience held in 2015. The Special Issue is to be published in December 2016 by Taylor and Francis. The abstracts have previously been published in the *Proceedings of the British Psychological Society* (2015) and are freely available. A launch of the Special Issue is scheduled for February, possibly at Gladstone's Library, Hawarden.

Secondly, ongoing work by Professor Astley has seen the development of a collection (a reader) of previously published research articles on religious and spiritual experience, based on an exhaustive review of the literature. The reader is at an advanced stage of development, and is due for completion and publication in 2017.

Thirdly, work by Lewis, Astley and colleagues has seen the publication of a number of research papers related to religious and spiritual experience, and also a number of conference papers. Some of this work has involved research into primary material contained in the RERC Archive.

Fourthly, Professor Lewis has continued to visit and work with colleagues in Russia. In doing so he remains increasingly well placed to undertake research in this context on religious and spiritual experience of young people; such access will allow young people to be questioned about their religious and spiritual experiences.

Fifthly, RERC Glyndŵr University remains committed to teaching the psychology of religion at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and specifically on the religious and spiritual experience.

The RERC at Glyndŵr University looks forward to building on the achievements of the last five years.

Professor Christopher Alan Lewis
Director of RERC, Glyndŵr University

RERC Lampeter: Summary of Directors' Report for AGM, 7 November 2016

The third RERC one-day conference was held in Lampeter on 3rd July 2016 on the topic Spirituality and Wellbeing. The keynote speaker was Revd Canon Dr Joanna Collicutt, Karl Jaspers Lecturer in Psychology and Spirituality at Ripon College Cuddesdon, who spoke about 'Being mindful and Christian'. Among the other speakers were Dr Penny Sartori (on NDE) and Revd Dr Jeff Leonardi, the honorary research fellow at the Centre. The event was well attended and led to interesting discussions. The topic of the conference is also the theme of the newly developed research seminar series at RERC Lampeter. In 2015/16 the seminar series had three sessions (on Personhood, Community and Mindfulness) and this academic year we have expanded it to four (on Body, Shamanism, Spirituality and Trauma, and Mindfulness). The next one-day conference will be held on 16th July 2017 (see Events, page 54).

Another recent highlight was the publication of *Study of Religious Experience – Methods and Approaches* (Equinox) based on the one-day conference in 2014. The Faculty organised a book launch in October 2016. Another publication of RERC Lampeter is the (online) Journal for the Study of Religions. The second issue is based on papers of the panel 'Bodily Dimension, Experience, and Ethnographic Research' at the 33rd Conference of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium) in 2015. The next issue will hopefully be published soon and will include an article by June Boyce-Tillman based on her Alister Hardy Lampeter lecture from 2015.

Ongoing work at RERC Lampeter includes that of Tom Pitchford who has responsibility for published material, and Jonathan Andrews who supervises the accounts of religious and spiritual experiences and other unpublished material. Tom also assists with the editing of the online Journal of the Study of Religious Experience.

This year we had a good intake for the MRes Religious Experience: four new students began in October (2 international and 2 local). Two other students are in Part 2 of the degree and are working on their dissertations. The module Religious Experience is also being studied by several MA students on other degree courses in the Faculty of Humanities and Performing Arts. We received several applications for the Alister Hardy bursary, though only one qualified (Richard Cesar, an American student).

Professor Bettina Schmidt and Alison Harding,

Directors of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre, Lampeter

Report from the Director of Communications for AGM, 7 November 2016

I had a busy year in 2016 on many fronts, including drawing up and printing new AHT publicity material and speaking at conferences for various organisations and in schools, as well as running Quiet Days and a retreat. The Alister Hardy Trust is becoming better known; we are able to participate in joint events with like-minded groups and we continue to support the work of the One Spirit Alliance. Dr David Greenwood and I keep in touch on matters relating to the day to day running of the AHT and visit Lampeter together from time to time to meet the RERC Directors and office staff there.

Schools:

This year I was invited to speak to sixth forms at St Mary's, Shaftesbury where students from the local state school were invited to join us, making a total of about sixty youngsters. I was also invited back to speak at the King's School in Gloucester.

Groups and Conferences:

In July I spoke at the Hounslow Friends of Faith AGM. I then gave a presentation at a conference on NDEs, *Is Heaven for Real?* at the University of Winchester. This event was hosted in association with the Scientific & Medical Network and was inspired by the work of Dr Shirley Firth, Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute for Theological Partnerships at the university. Apart from Shirley, speakers included Dr Pim van Lommel, Dr Peter Fenwick, Professor Paul Badham and Tanya Garland. In my talk I linked NDEs and religious experience.

In August Professor David Tacey and I were the speakers at the annual conference of the Guild of Pastoral Psychology at Worcester College, Oxford entitled *Beyond Literal Religion*. I then spoke on the subject of *Experiences of Angels* for the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies (CFPSS) at their annual conference in Bournemouth.

Audiences are always interested in hearing of the work of Sir Alister Hardy and his legacy as well as listening to accounts of experiences from our archive. I receive letters of appreciation after the events from organisers and participants. Our publicity material is also disseminated this way.

Quiet Days and Retreat

These are less academic events, and are enjoyed by a wide range of people. I have spoken on various spiritual themes at Holland House, a retreat centre near Evesham and I led a weekend retreat on *Exploring Spiritual Experience* at the Ammerdown Centre in November. I feel that in this way we reach out to a different audience and enable people to reflect on their own spiritual experience.

Publications

As a result of my talks, I have articles in the *CFPSS Quarterly Review*, *Psychic News* and in the *Faith Initiative Magazine*, a biannual magazine, of which over 2000 copies are sent out to schools, colleges, universities, religious communities and interfaith groups throughout the UK and also overseas. The papers from the Winchester conference will also be published.

Events

The AHT Members and Activities Group (MAG) consists of Dr Sarah Boss the Membership Secretary, Andy Burns and me. We manage the day to day activities of members.

At the moment there are three local groups: Oxford Area, South Wales, and North Wales – two of which are run as discussion groups from home. Sadly the London Group has been dissolved, following the retirement of John Franklin as Secretary but Eileen Sheppard and Celine Corbin have agreed to keep former London Group members informed of interesting events in London.

Andy Burns and I organise AHT events, and we plan to arrange an annual one-day conference in London, to be run jointly with another like-minded organisation. On June 3rd 2017 we will join the British Teilhard Association and in 2018 the CFPSS. We will also hold our annual Members Day on October 14th 2017 at the Quaker Meeting House in Oxford [See Events, page 55].

Facebook and Website

We post details of our events on both Facebook and the AHT website, as does Professor Bettina Schmidt, so that members and others with an interest in our activities are informed of meetings, talks and book launches. Other organisations also post details of our events on their websites, and through the One Spirit Alliance we reach many different groups.

Marianne Rankin



RERC News

A progress report on the new research Project: Spirituality and Health: the place of spirituality within therapy in the UK and Brazil

In 2016, RERC Lampeter launched a new research project that will look at the place of spirituality in therapy. Over the last decades increasing attention has been directed to the spiritual dimension of therapy, but there has been little research in the area. The aim of this project is to fill this gap and to examine the role of spirituality in psychology, psychotherapy and counselling in two different cultural contexts, the UK and Brazil. We will investigate how professionals and students understand spirituality and its role within their profession, in order to assess possible implications and policy recommendations for the provision of mental health care.

The project was developed out of an ongoing collaboration with Dr Jeff Leonardi, Honorary Research Fellow at RERC. We want to identify commonalities and differences in the approach to spirituality in the medical profession in these two distinct cultural systems. Dr Leonardi began this summer to conduct interviews with person-centred therapists in the UK, for which he gained financial support from the Alister Hardy Trust to reimburse travel costs. In the autumn we gained additional financial support for the comparative study from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and its start-up funding scheme for research linked to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Our starting point is a broad definition of spirituality developed by Leonardi (2008). According to this definition, spirituality refers to a level or dimension of experiencing which overlaps with the common-sense and every-day, but which is distinctive, special and seems to connect with a wider or higher level of awareness and being. We argue that spiritual experience conveys a sense of profound meaning and purpose and connectedness with creation, life and other human beings, and a corresponding sense of responsibility for one's own part in it all, which can have a profound impact on well-being.

Spirituality is perceived therefore in this project as a possible source of health, which includes positive mental health, social health, community health, environmental health and physical health. In line with the World Psychiatric Association (2015) we argue that spirituality has wider implications for health issues in terms of diagnosis, treatment, outcome, prevention, quality of life and wellbeing. However, despite a growing interest, mainstream medical institutions and professions tend to overlook the relationship between spirituality and health, which is not covered in most training programmes. Students therefore tend to be unprepared to identify or consider the impact of spiritual experiences, identities, belief systems and the possible importance these have for well-being and mental health.

This project aims to identify the need for training in this area, by examining, firstly, the current understanding of the role of spirituality within therapy among therapists and counsellors, and secondly, the understanding and training of students in psychology, counselling and related programmes in the area of spirituality, religious belief and mental well-being. In order to gather this information we are currently surveying therapists in the UK and Brazil about their experience of spirituality. For this purpose we have set up two on-line surveys with the same questions in English and in Portuguese:

[<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/3130382/New-Survey>
<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/3130430/Espiritualidade-e-Saude-Pesquisa>].

The links to the surveys are placed on the RERC website and circulated widely via various mailing lists and social media. Dr Everton Maraldi, researcher at the Institute of Psychology at the University of Sao Paulo, has joined the project and helped to circulate the link widely in Brazil. We have so far (January 2017) over 100 replies from Brazil and about 20 from the UK.

The stronger response rate in Brazil is not surprising as the boundary between the medical profession and spirituality seems much more open. The Spiritist movement in Brazil has developed a strong scientific discourse that has led to the emergence of institutions such as the *Associação Médico-Espírita*, and of a growing number of Spiritist hospitals across Brazil. One can find health professionals operating both in public medical institutions and Spiritist medical centres. This crossing of boundaries between faith and science applies not only to Spiritism but also to other practices, and to both patients and healers. Patients often regard spiritual healing practices as alternative or complementary treatments to biomedicine. While initial discussions with Brazilian psychologists conducted in the summer of 2016 in Brazil have, as in the UK, demonstrated a lack of research about the place of spirituality in therapeutic practice, they seem more aware of their patient's spirituality than in the UK. Over the coming year we will focus on analysing the data from the surveys and consider a way forward. One of Dr Maraldi's research students, Maria Cristina M. de Barros, from the Institute of Psychiatry at the University of São Paulo has offered additional help to analyse the Brazilian data.

If you are interested in taking part in the research or one of the surveys please check out the RERC website for information:

<http://uwtsd.ac.uk/library/alister-hardy-religious-experience-research-centre/research>

Professor Bettina Schmidt, Director, RERC Lampeter

RERC One-day Conference: *Spirituality, Therapy and Well-being.*

Lampeter Campus, 16th July 2017.

Lectures by Dr Wendy Dossett, Revd Dr Jeff Leonardi, and others (see Events on page 54, for details).

The programme and abstracts will be uploaded onto the RERC website, probably in April.



Reports from the Local Groups

North Wales Group:

E-mail received from Dr Keith Beasley:

Dear Pat, Dear Marianne

Thanks for the latest *De Numine*. I was immediately drawn to the final 'From the Editor' and prompted to write the attached response. Hope it's of value!

At the end I've also included our local group info.

With best wishes

Keith Beasley

AHT in North Wales:

This article is rather more than a local group's report. It is also a response to *From the Editor* in the last issue (page 60) expressing real concern at the apparent demise of our local groups. I hope it will inspire members elsewhere to take the next steps necessary ...

We, humanity, are evolving. We, AHT, are evolving. Likewise local groups. What has been happening in North Wales over the last 8 years is an excellent case in point.

Way back in 2009 as a postgraduate student at Bangor University researching 'Transcendent Thought', I visited RERC and AHS at Lampeter and found the experience extremely valuable for both research material and moral support. As a member also of SMN and the Wrekin Trust, and with so few members of either group in sparsely populated North Wales, I set up a group that would act as a meeting point for all 3 organisations. After all, did they not share similar or at least overlapping interests and intents?

That group was *Bangor University Transcending Thought* (BUTT) where I offered some workshops on techniques related to 'consciousness beyond the rational'; typical attendance was only 1 or 2 people. Thanks to my role as Chairman of the University's Postgrad Forum (and annual postgrad conference) and the support of the Blaker fund, I was able to run some larger events with prominent speakers (Nick Clement, Marilyn Monk, Don MacGregor). These were well attended but didn't trigger any significant increase in membership.

With my Doctorate obtained and student status lost, the group evolved into *One Spirit North Wales*, aligning to the *One Spirit Alliance* initiative. We networked with a few other local inter-faith and similar individuals but again, the effort expended hardly seemed to be holding us steady, let alone making any headway. I'm sure the story is familiar for many others amongst you!

Last year I found myself (sometimes we just have to allow things to happen) working with Bangor University's Confucius Institute, who offered to host and contribute to the next event I was planning: *Only Human!* This was a half-day multi-disciplinary, experiential forum exploring what it means to 'be human' in the context of university research, developments in health & well-being, approaches to teaching & learning and community engagement. The

cultural exchange context and the peaceful setting of the Confucius Institute enabled a very powerful exchange to take place. A number of attendees reported the sort of experience that would not be out of place in the RERC archive.

A few weeks ago we held a follow-up day event, again at Bangor University's Confucius Institute: *Beyond Thought: Consciousness beyond the rational*. Again there was a full house, and again some heightened states of consciousness were reported. Even more hopeful for the growth of our group, there was a very real sense of 'what next?' and a desire to move our success onwards and outwards.

So what's happened in the 8 years since I first made contact with AHT, why the change in fortunes? There may well be an underlying increase in awareness of non-rational consciousness and exceptional experiences; more people are probably ready and open for these. But there are three more practical and organisational factors that I would identify as critical:

- We changed our name from *One Spirit North Wales* to *Bangor ... Beyond*. i.e. from exclusive language that can put people off to inclusive, every-day language
- Having done that we were able to set up and use social media to promote our events. The *Bangor ... Beyond* meet-up has gained 20 members in just a couple of months, just through being listed!
- Our main events have an intentional balance between intellectual presentation/discussion and participative engagement/experiential content. Our intent is to integrate mind and body through utilising facilitators who themselves know about exceptional experiences being personally familiar with them.

Are we not, in studying exceptional experiences, concerned with the potential for all humans? If so, our membership potential is unlimited! By now we should have learnt that having a few speakers, however eminent, just doesn't cut it any more. Likewise, to appeal to individuals who have and want such experiences (rather than studying them), events need to enable such experiences. From my coordinating activities in North Wales, I've also learnt that they need to be promoted in ways more in keeping with the growing mainstream interest in deeper, more meaningful experiences generally, and through making more use of social media.

Our success in North Wales has been due to many individuals being willing and able to meet me both intellectually and, now I finally use the word, spiritually. But I had to learn their language, allow some seeds to germinate and quell my impatience too.

Dr Keith Beasley

The full programme for the 'Beyond Thought' event and links to videos can be found here: <http://beyondthought.today/Bangor/OSNW%20Beyond%20Thought%202016%20With%20Video%20Links.pdf>

North Wales Group meetings tend to be organised at short notice and are announced on www.meetup.com/Bangor-Beyond/ Venue is usually Bangor University

Contact: Keith Beasley, keith@keithbeasley.co.uk

Oxford Area Group:

Our Area members meet six times a year and the meetings rotate around the nine constituent Local Meetings: Abingdon, Burford, Charlbury, Faringdon, Headington, Marlborough, Oxford, and Swindon.

The January meeting, co-ordinated by **Ursula Kneisel**, was held in Oxford. It was a great opportunity to meet friends from other meetings. The subject for the morning was Worship for Business, followed by a shared lunch prepared by the Oxford group. In the afternoon Rhonda Riachi facilitated a discussion on *Spirituality in later life: a quiet strength*. She is a Member of Headington Meeting. Rhonda has developed an interest in the health of older people, choosing dementia care for the topic of her MSc dissertation in 2013. She seeks to integrate spiritual experience and wisdom into daily life and to help others to do so.

In February we met in Oxford for a talk and discussion on *Levitation and the Life of D. D. Homes*.

In March we had an open discussion, sharing our own beliefs, questions and interests, and our own experiences, followed by a soup and bread lunch.

Contact: Tanya Garland: 01865 244260 tanya.garland.37@gmail.com

South-East Wales Group:

Meeting on December 8th 2016: *Our Spiritual Searching*

'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy'
(This quote from *Hamlet*, though written over 400 years ago, is still very current.)

1. What initiated our searching? We all expressed something of the essence of the profundity of our spiritual awareness, sometimes with much emotion:

'A feeling (under a mild dental anaesthetic) of being apart from anything fixed in the Universe, and an inner voice that underlined this feeling. It influenced my thinking through my life.'

'A séance I was taken to in my early twenties, where my recently deceased piano teacher spoke to me.'

'I think it was my Bible for Children, and being in my own company a lot. I wanted to know if God was true! I was 8 years old. Jesus said the Gifts of Spirit were healing, speaking with tongues and prophesy. There was only one choice – prophesy. I threw this to the air, and let it go. The future became evident to me very rarely, but extremely positively just a very few years after!'

2. What have we learnt from those experiences? The experiences we shared mainly came to us unsought, and certainly in diverse places – a dentist's chair, a séance, following a childhood dream paralysis, a local library, an unkempt field ...

We have only our experiences to rely on. Book learning could inspire – or confuse – our understanding, but true teaching comes from within ourselves. The presence of a guide, or guidance and protection was experienced by virtually all of us.

3. How should we take our findings forward? By being sensitive to Guidance; beware of being pedagogical – as my yoga teacher said, ‘we can only *teach* what the pupil already knows!’ So we must trust each one of us to follow our own way through life.

Meeting on 22nd September: *Reunions*

We watched the final section of the DVD we have used at previous meetings. Once again, we did not much like the format of the rather gimmicky and bitty DVD, but we used it as an introduction to our afternoon. It would be fair to say that it did not set out to be from a Spiritualist perspective, being designed for a general public.

Janis, a member of our group who used to have ties with the Spiritualist church disagreed with the DVD itself in a number of ways. One scene in particular offended her, focussing on people visiting a specially prepared dark booth where they endeavoured to make contact with their departed loved ones. Throughout the DVD the emphasis was on the people initiating, or participating in, ways to contact the departed. She said with great conviction that it was for the spirit world to contact us (this does indeed happen, often in unexpected ways).

Janis then gave us a taste of the Spiritualists’ National Union’s beliefs by reading out their Seven Principles. The Seven Principles are important to an understanding of today’s church, and warrant deeper attention than we gave them during our meeting. They would make a fitting link and introduction into our next meeting.

She mentioned how on one occasion when attending a meeting, the medium present was unable to give a ‘reading’ for a member of the congregation, yet she herself got a vivid ‘message’ (description) for that person which proved to be accurate in every detail!

At the end of the afternoon we discussed how to widen interest in Alister Hardy’s work, both locally and nationally. It remains in my mind that in spite of the Hardy question having found so much more interest in the non-church-going public, the Trust has very many connections with religious bodies, and seems to look through the various religions for its main research. But then, how can one reach the general public? We really value our group and hope that many more such groups would form. Has the time come to use the media to re-launch the Hardy question into the Great Wide Spaces out there?

Llantarnam Abbey:

The S. E. Wales Group is organising the Gathering at Llantarnam this year. We see the Gathering as being a time for sharing. Each participant will have, by virtue of being a member of the AHT Society, a story and philosophy that will be of interest to all, and as within our own group sessions, is encouraged to give a short talk or presentation in the light of their visualisation of religious, or spiritual dimension(s). We extend a warm welcome to All AHT members. See page 55 in Events.

Mary Cook



Llantarnam Gathering 2016 'Crossing Boundaries'; Llantarnam Abbey, 24 – 26 July 2015

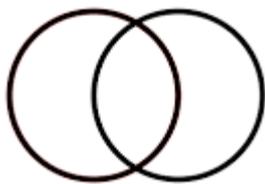
Boundaries and beyond

Overview by Patricia Murphy

A small group this time, all but one of us familiar with the Abbey, and all the 'regulars' delighted to be back. After the usual opening ceremony, presided over by Mary, of placing our special objects on the central table and saying a bit about what they meant to us, and being greeted by Sister St Joseph, we trod the cobbled path over to the refectory for a delightful supper of fish pie and sinfully delicious dessert.



I then gave a short presentation on the *Vesica Piscis*: very simply, it is a symbol that has been used from classical times, through the Christianity era, to contemporary humanistic psychology deriving from Jungian principles. It is a portal between, and ideally linking, outer



Vesica Pisces

and inner, the spiritual and the material, and the conscious and the unconscious mind. I asked the group to draw their own *vesica piscis*, and, throughout the weekend, return to their drawing and see what was emerging through the portal: this produced some remarkable results. On Sunday morning we sat in the garden and shared our drawings, and what they meant to us (see below).

The Friday evening presentation was about boundaries in the *Mabinogion*, delivered by Ken Rees with both scholarly accuracy and a pleasing sensitivity to the nature of boundaries in Celtic lore; in this context they have a liminal quality of otherworldliness. To the Celts, travel between the worlds went beyond magical realism; spiritual experience *was* reality, and boundaries were doorways to other levels. The complexity of the interweaving of the four branches of the Mabinogion and indeed of the stories within the branches left me spellbound (a phrase I have just wondered about anew: being literally spellbound was one of the dangers of travelling between the worlds without proper preparation or the requisite protection). Ken's mastery of his subject left me in awe.

We rather stumbled through a circle dance at the end of the evening, doing our best but already succumbing to weariness, and went off gratefully to bed.

Saturday morning, we all arrived in the breakfast room more or less at 8 o'clock as Mary had firmly requested. There was indeed a full schedule before early lunch. Alan mused on Buddhist philosophy (which would maybe have been better later with more time); Mary recounted her first spiritual experience and described how it had shaped her life; then our key note speaker Dr Jeff Leonardi arrived for coffee, followed by what has been described below as a seminar, which we all engaged in. His spiritual journey had taken him along many

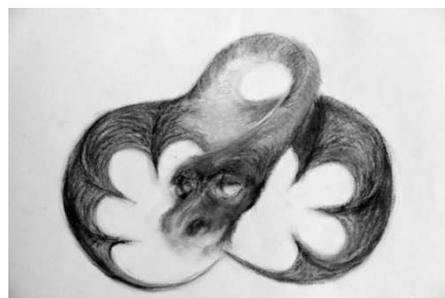
paths before he reached his destiny – ordination as an Anglican priest, a journey he has described in *De Numine* issue 61. He also trained as a counsellor, and led what turned into a group session with skill. He had meant to go on to deliver a lecture, but there was no time before lunch, where he joined us for more discussion.

The afternoon was the mountain walk:



After supper, at which we celebrated seven years of the Gathering with French wine, we shared poems and, emboldened by Ken's mastery of the *Mabingion*, I ventured a story telling, knowing he was on hand to help me if I stumbled in the telling, as it had been some years since I did this last. I told the story of Ceridwen and her cauldron, and the birth of Taliesin the famous Welsh bard, incorporating my own poem about Ceridwen, and some of Taliesin's; his is the earliest bardic poetry that was written down and is strongly shamanic in character. This ended the evening.

On Sunday morning we met early, out in the sunshine, to 'show and tell' (or in grown up terms, present our art work) on the *Vesica Piscis*. This was fascinating for the group, and often unexpected for the artist. Reproduced here is Ken Price's dragon/serpent emerging from the *Vesica Pisces*.



Then half of us went to mass – this intrigued me; we were evenly split between ritualists and others this time, and there were no repercussions (see the Llantarnam report in issue 59 pp.23-27 for the ongoing debate this schism caused last time).

There was a sense of completion at our plenary session, so we actually finished early, although discussion of how the Gathering could continue went on over lunch. Mary suggested that the S. E. Wales group should host a weekend next year* and invite other AHT members as guests. I wish Mary the very best for next year, but for myself, the seven-year cycle has been completed, although I hope to visit the Abbey again. I am attracted to Sr Bridget's retreat there next September.

* This has been arranged, and is scheduled for September. See Events, page 55. Ed.

Abbey '16, from Mary Cook

We eight came together bringing a wealth of diverse experience and insights, and enjoyed each other's comradeship and contributions with gratitude. A coincidence: we had a trip to Upper Cwmbrân (the cauldron of the giant, 'Brân'), to experience the enormous 'bowl' within the geology of the mountain. As we reached its centre – as far as one can – I was startled by the cry of a raven ('brân' is the Welsh word for raven). I looked up, and the raven was flying over! Brân was welcoming us! A feature of all seven gatherings had been the ancient saga, the *Mabinogion*, in which Brân features as an ancient Celtic king.

Cleansing the labyrinthine way

Begin from the centre – but where *is* our path?

The path *is* there, but it's overgrown

Is it really there? Or is the path pure illusion?

Will we lose our way?

Did we not lose our way to the centre – to our *own* centre?

How can we be sure we're there?

If only we'd weeded those stone flags along the way!

Let's cleanse our past. Let go of life's experiences

– both the worst and the best. Our way will open.

And that touch of the Divine which is melded into our soul

Will guide and protect us.

Only now can we begin from our centre to spread our gifts throughout the World.

But the Way out into the world will need weeding too!

From Alan Underwood

This was my third Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey, having had a 'gap year' in 2015. Numbers were smaller than usual and on the first evening Mary gave us explanations as to the missing faces of yesteryear. The few attendees may well have contributed to what I felt was the most harmonious experience I've had at the Abbey to date, for by the weekend's close a group *egregore* had been established only to be dispersed, of course, by the post Sunday lunchtime departures (slightly rushed?).

Questioning and a more general discursiveness played a greater role than on the two previous occasions I've attended, but at the same time there was an adequate input through various workshops and talks, in particular Dr. Jeff Leonardi's seminar on Saturday morning encouraging some very searching responses by members of the audience.

As at some other meetings Welsh mythology featured strongly, both through Paddy's storytelling of Ceridwen and Ken's exposition of the Four Branches. For me this annual (to date) retreat remains something of a unique contribution to both free-thinking and inter-faith dialogue (in its widest sense) and an important resource for spiritual exploration among peers.

Long may it continue, either in its present form or some equally congenial alternative!

Blessings to all, *Alan*



Alan's dream of the boundary between the conscious and the unconscious

From Ken Rees

This year's Annual Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey was the sixth I have attended. Making my way there I was in little doubt that a pleasant and enjoyable weekend was in store, if only because the Abbey and grounds is such a beautiful place of quiet contentment and because the nuns and the ancillary staff are so welcoming.

As in recent years we had gathered to explore spiritual experiences through the theme of boundaries. This year we considered 'Boundaries and Beyond' and a going beyond it proved to be. Many varied experiences and approaches to spirituality were examined over the weekend. Whether in Christian or Buddhist traditions, in myth or dream, whether rational or emotional, philosophical or philological, mainstream or new age; all were treated with equal respect and openness, born of a recognition that each approach has the potential to throw light upon the mystery of spirit.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the presentation by Dr Jeff Leonardi on 'Relational Spirituality'. This examined spiritual experiences that arise not in isolated individuals but during the conversations and emotional encounters between people; these then are interpersonal spiritual experiences. Over the years the Gathering has been taking place this has perhaps been a neglected topic. It may then have been a coincidence, (or perhaps not) that this year's coming together proved to be so harmonious, so convivial, and so uplifting. It seemed to me that our small band emerged from the Gathering with more than a little goodwill and emotional warmth, combined with desire to maintain the mutual support that the weekend had engendered.

Opportunities to engage in this way with others, in mode of open and caring spiritual enquiry, seem to me to be a rare occurrence in modern society. From my perspective this is something to be valued and cherished and there must surely be a role here for the new Alister Hardy Trust in developing and promoting participatory events of this type?

Report compiled by Patricia Murphy

Remembering Friends

Tigger Ramsay-Brown 20 June 1921 – 3 December 2016

The term 'force of nature' accurately describes Tigger Ramsay-Brown. Born and brought up in pre-independence India, she could have stayed in the tennis and cocktail set. Instead she used her privilege to open doors to the poorest people: Bihar famine victims, Andhra cyclone refugees, the wretched of the earth. For more than thirty years Tigger Stack (as she was then known) worked tirelessly with Oxfam in her beloved Indian sub-continent, using a range of high level contacts, and persuasive charm and force of personality, to get through red tape and bureaucracy in order





to save lives. She also undertook assignments for many other aid organisations, especially Afghan Aid on whose board she sat till 2014. At age 92 Tigger also travelled with her daughter Gael to Myanmar en route from India to Australia.

Tigger's sister Anne Wetherall had been one of Sir Alistair Hardy's researchers in the 1980s at the Religious Experience Research Centre in Oxford, and was investigating spiritual experiences arising from imprisonment. Anne went on to found the Prison Ashram Project, later known as the Prison Phoenix Trust. Tigger was a key Trustee from its inception in 1988 till her death. The PPT, an inter-faith charity which promotes yoga and meditation in prisons, embodied Tigger's eclectic approach to faith. A deeply spiritual woman, reared in Christianity but very open both to Hinduism and to Zen Buddhism, she was a tireless seeker for truth and endlessly curious and open-minded.

A person with a huge capacity for friendship across age, class and race, Tigger loved debate and challenge. She was an indomitable personality who enriched and indeed saved the lives of an extraordinary range of people.

Stewart Jeffrey, Former Trustee of Prison Phoenix Trust

I got to know Tigger a little through meetings of the Alister Hardy Oxford and Cotswold Group. Committed as she was to the benefits of spiritual practice and education, Tigger was keen to explore what else the Society could do to help people to integrate spiritual experiences (some of which can be very challenging to interpret) into their daily lives, along the lines of the Prison Phoenix Trust work. With her friend John Gaynor, Teacher at the Oxford Zen Centre, we discussed what guidance might be given to people who were troubled by their spiritual experiences. On one occasion we met at Tigger's house in Woodstock and I was stunned by her beautiful garden, lovingly maintained over many years.

Tigger and John drafted a proposal for discussion at the Alister Hardy Society AGM. Unfortunately the Society did not feel it could take on any advisory work, as therapeutic assistance is subject to regulation and advisors would need recognised qualifications and insurance. This would have required a significant change to the charitable objects of the Society.

I had the impression that Tigger believed in many things but ageing was not one of them, and I certainly never believed her calendar age! What an inspiration she was. May her spirit continue to inspire us all.

Rhonda Riachi



Letters to the Editor

Dear Paddy,

I just wanted to pass on my sincere thanks to everyone who sent cards and letters following the death of my wife, Christine last year. I was also touched by the warm tribute written by John Franklin and also your own words in the editorial of the last journal. In September the family travelled to Northern Ireland to scatter Christine's ashes at Giant's Causeway on the Antrim Coast, a place that she loved in the country of her birth.

With kind regards,

Andy Burns

Dear Jean and Paddy

What a wonderful issue Autumn 2016 is! I simply had to sit down and read it from cover to cover. The two sets of correspondence are riveting and show that readers are engaging with each other and the important issues that lie at the heart of what the AHT is all about.

There are wide-ranging articles and reviews as well as poems and evocative photographs too. Then as if all that weren't enough, we end up with a fascinating insight into religious life in a Spanish village.

Many congratulations to you both for producing such an exceptional journal and for managing to work so well between Wales and Spain.

Much love to you both,

Marianne

Dear Patricia,

Thank you for helping to make 'soul' an issue. Referring to the last paragraph of your editorial in the autumn 2016 (No.61) edition of *De Numine*:

Almost everyone knows we came into this world in a tiny fertilised egg. I have discovered (via an ongoing 'spiritual' experience) we also go out in one! – the one we represent with the word soul. Consequently, for me, soul is certainly not a concept – a thought of the mind – but a solid physical reality, one that emits feelings of its own about its needs and about its 'being'; very like how we know when our main body needs things, like food, water, keeping warm etc.

It was not long after my 'experience' got underway (1953) that I began to realise that many of the feelings I was getting and which worded naturally in my mind, were very similar in nature to those recorded as spoken by Jesus and by other people we call prophets and used as part of their teachings. The Commandments stand out especially, as urgent feelings of need from my soul to my mind, to supply essential nourishment for its well-being and to give it protection from destructive energies.

At the same time as these feelings were happening (still are!) it became clear to me that my awareness had widened a lot, not in mind, but physically. This was all seemingly due to my soul 'waking up' out of a 'coma' of a weak and malnourished condition. It seems natural for me now to forecast ahead and say that when soul restoration (to 'Garden of Eden' condition) happens generally in the majority of people, that will be the time when humanity arrives at the 'starting blocks' of its evolution proper.

So, rather important, this hardly ever mentioned part of our anatomy we call soul. For myself, I now know it as THE most important part of us!

Best Regards,

Henry Houghton.

Email from Marianne Rankin, 27/2/17

It is with sadness that I attach a shortened version of a letter received from the Wrekin Trust:

'Following much discussion and heart searching, the Trustees of the Wrekin Trust have taken the reluctant decision to dissolve the Trust with effect from 31 March 2017.

Emerging from post-war Adult Education, the Wrekin Trust was founded in 1971 as an educational charity by Sir George Trevelyan and friends. It was a unique and brilliant development, and singularly prominent in the promotion of the holistic world view both at that time and over the following decades.

The Wrekin programme at that time consisted of a wide range of residential and day courses, conferences, and lectures which were made possible by the contribution of the many supporters who gravitated to Wrekin as something of a beacon in the field of emerging spiritual consciousness.

In recent times, current Wrekin Trustees and helpers have offered a limited programme of niche courses and other short term developmental courses, and, with dwindling financial resources, have reached the conclusion that the Wrekin's pioneering mission is now complete. This view has been endorsed by David Lorimer, President, and Carol Duncan, Vice President.

The Trust's remaining charitable funds are being used to support two legacy projects, one developing the spiritual competence of young people and the other providing a web portal for the exploration of the essential roots of British Spirituality.

It just remains to express a huge thank you to you and the many other supporters who have made the Wrekin Trust such an instrumental charity over the past 46 years.'

An event to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of Wrekin Trust is being held on Tuesday 21 March 2017 at Hawkwood College, the organisation's spiritual home. We have had a long and close association with the Wrekin Trust, and an account of this event would be very welcome for the Autumn De Numine. Ed.



Book Reviews

Edward F. Kelly, Adam Crabtree and Paul Marshall (eds.), *Beyond Physicalism: towards reconciliation of science and spirituality*

Lanham, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 634 pp. ISBN 978 1 4422 3238 9

Physicalism is the modern philosophical equivalent of what has been called, and still is called as far as I know, 'scientific materialism' or 'scientism'. The principle is the same: the only subjects worth rational investigation are solid physical objects and the phenomena in which they are involved. Sensory experiences that cannot be reproduced under the same conditions are not considered to provide valid experimental data. The whole raft of psychic or spiritual experiences, as defined by Alister Hardy for example, is still ignored by mainstream science.

Both psychic and mystical experiences are considered in this substantial volume, bringing in ideas that are in conflict not only with science but also with religion, especially evangelical Christianity and radical Islam. The book is about embracing psychic or spiritual experiences within the mind-set of science; it is presented in 15 chapters, some of them written by the editors, with short biographies of editors and contributors at the end. There are also comprehensive references at the end of each chapter. This book is a reworked version of an equally expansive publication, *Irreducible Mind* by Edward and Emily Kelly.

Chapter 1 by Edward Kelly looks at events that are now accepted as real events in the world, but which are inexplicable through pre-twentieth century or so-called Newtonian science. These include the placebo effect, suggested reincarnation memories, mediumship communication and other psychic phenomena suggesting post-mortem survival, the genius-level creativity of savants and otherwise normal individuals, and the transforming effect on personality of mystical experiences such as out-of-body and near-death experiences. William James and philosophers of the Enlightenment like Leibniz 'recognised the impossibility of explaining consciousness and allied phenomena within the framework of classical physics'. Mystical experiences, as windows on reality, are explored further by Paul Marshall in Chapter 2.

Michael Grosso's essay in Chapter 3 focuses on the mind-body problem that has tormented philosophers and scientists for centuries: how does a physical brain 'create' the consciousness of the non-material mind? Grosso makes the point that the physicalist interpretation of mind is metaphysics, *not* science – it involves the interpretation of facts, not the observation and recording of facts. The chapter considers the views not only of William James but also those of Frederic Myers (an English classicist and philologist who was one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research), Henri Bergson (a turn-of-the-century French philosopher), the German poet and philosopher Friedrich Schiller, the English writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley, and others going back to the days of the Greek neo-platonists. The biology of these 'transmission' models of the mind-body issue is then further explored by Kelly and Presti in Chapter 4.

We get to one of the prevailing ideas about consciousness in Chapter 5 with Henry Stapp's quantum mechanical interpretation involving the mind of the individual as participating observer. This means that in interpreting the implications of quantum physics we must abandon the 'conceptual framework that Isaac Newton had created in the seventeenth century.' The empirical properties of matter that we observe are interpreted as the result of the interactions of the fundamental constituents of matter – the atoms and molecules that produce the physical world. Quantum physics presents us with a complementary universe in which the conscious mind influences the brain rather than being controlled by it. Stapp then goes into detail about von Neumann's interpretation of quantum mechanics. This provides us with 'a rationally coherent conception of reality that ... encompasses both the mental and physical sides of nature and the connection between them.' Chapter 6 expands on these ideas with Mind-Matter Correlations in Dual-Aspect Monism According to Pauli and Jung, though the authors, Atmanspacher and Fach, admit that 'a serious theory of psychophysical phenomena ... is not yet anywhere in sight.' Bernard Carr says in Chapter 7 that while the contents of consciousness are amenable to study by the methodology of science, the study of consciousness itself is beyond its remit.

With Chapter 8 by Gregory Shaw on Platonic Siddhas, we move from the predominantly scientific into spiritual realms and a kind of philosophy entirely unknown to us today. Shaw talks about the school of Aedesius at Pergamum and the part played by Sosipatra, who was 'taught not by men but by divine beings ... while still a child.' Sosipatra is said to have shown clairvoyance of a type more familiar to us perhaps through Swedenborg's vision of the Stockholm fire. Those who attain such powers, which included Plotinus, the originator of Neoplatonism, were known as Siddhas. Today, philosophy in the West has become 'an entirely intellectual enterprise, separated from the art of sacred things.' There is an interesting discussion in this chapter of the philosophy of Plotinus which has come down to us largely through the *Enneads*, compiled by his student Porphyry. These ideas are explored further in Chapter 9: Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and the Siddhis by Kelly and Ian Whicher. Chapter 10 by Loriliai Biernacki mines Indian medieval Tantra with the goal of mapping the conceptual framework for the relationship between mind and matter through a philosophy of panentheism.

Editor Paul Marshall dons his writer's hat to pose an interesting question to open Chapter 11, Why We Are Conscious of So Little: if the human mind is capable of psychic powers, why do

these occur so rarely? Several turn-of-the-century philosophers, like William James, Frederic Myers, and Henri Bergson, were interested in the nature and validation of psychic or mystical experiences, but were also interested to explore this question. The accepted explanation is that supra-liminal consciousness filters out extraneous sensory information that is not of immediate use for survival. With the sensory input generally available to most humans, subliminal information is not usually likely to be of great use. The discussion in this chapter then centres around the idealistic metaphysics of Leibniz' *Monadology*, particularly in relation to the philosophy of Plotinus. Marshall uses these ideas to interpret *psi* and mystical perceptions in the context of the perceptual nature of monads.

Adam Crabtree reviews Charles Sanders Peirce's vision of the Continuity of Mind in Chapter 12. Crabtree emphasises Peirce's view that 'any workable metaphysics must be based on empirical evidence.' Where Karl Popper maintained that science involved making a series of *a priori* speculations – an inductive rather than deductive process – Peirce supported the conventional view of the advances of science through a process he called *abduction* – 'examining a mass of facts and allowing these facts to suggest a theory'.

Chapter 13, *Mind Beyond Body*, by Eric Weiss is intended as a summary of his book *The Long Trajectory* and the arguments are developed out of the ideas of Alfred North Whitehead. As the full title of Weiss' book indicates, this chapter provides an explanation for parapsychological phenomena using Trans-physical Process Metaphysics. Weiss also follows Sri Aurobindo in developing a theory to provide an explanation of mysticism and precognition. Parapsychological phenomena are considered under four headings: telepathy, psychokinesis, out-of-body experiences and reincarnation.

Chapter 14, by Edward Kelly, and Chapter 15, by Michael Murphy, summarise the theme of this book. Kelly gives us a worldview grounded in science and spirituality, again following his earlier book *Irreducible Mind*. Basically, it is quantum physics that has made subjects in parapsychology, hitherto thought to be outside the remit of science, rationally accessible. This new approach to mystical and psychic experiences leads Michael Murphy in the final chapter, to express these ideas in the religious terms of panentheism – a deity that is both transcendent and immanent, one that is within us during our earthly lives, as suggested by Anthony Freeman and John Shelby Spong for example, but of which we become part when we become discarnate.

The book ends with a detailed Index and Notes on Contributors. I think this is an excellent book on the subject but it is written at a high academic level which might prove challenging to lay readers. A certain grounding in philosophy, and especially the philosophy of religion, would make the text much more accessible.

Reviewed by Howard Jones

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**David Lorimer (ed.), *Prophet for Our Times: the life and teachings of Peter Deunov*
Hay House UK, 2015. 272 pp. ISBN 978 1 78180 591 6 (pbk). £12.99.**

This is a reissue of *Prophet for Our Times*, first published almost twenty-five years ago. In his Introduction David Lorimer, the editor, gives a comprehensive account of the fascinating life and profound teachings of Peter Deunov, also known by his spiritual name of Beinsa Douno or simply as The Master.

The foreword to this new edition was written by Dr Wayne Dyer, a well-known American writer and broadcaster in the field of self-development and spiritual growth. The reissue of the book was due to his desire to share the work of the Bulgarian philosopher who so influenced him. Sadly, Wayne Dyer died in the year of publication – as it says on his website, ‘In 2015 he left his body, returning to Infinite Source to embark on his next adventure.’

David Lorimer is well-known to AHT members for his work with the Wrekin Trust and the Scientific and Medical Network as well as for his contributions to our own events. David first came across the philosopher’s work himself in 1985 and has followed his teachings ever since, even learning Bulgarian to enable him to read the texts in the original and to translate them into English. For those of us unfamiliar with Peter Deunov, the quotation on the cover is an inducement to further exploration. It is by Albert Einstein: ‘The world bows down before me; I bow down before the Master Peter Deunov.’

Peter Deunov lived from 1864 to 1944 and would surely have been better known in the West had it not been for the Iron Curtain. The story of his life is a remarkable one, as he had extraordinary powers – apparently able to appear and disappear at will and to perform spiritual healing. There were also accounts of after death communications. Beinsa Douno considered himself one of a line of teachers of Truth in the White Brotherhood, or the Divine School, imparting the Perennial Wisdom, the truth at the heart of all the major religious traditions. Teaching sessions began early, at 5 a.m. and were often introduced by songs he

had composed, which he sang and played on the violin. Gymnastic exercises and pan-rhythmy frequently took place after the teaching sessions. The aim was to show the disciple '... not only the way to the Truth, but also its application.'

Beinsa Douno's message was one of Love, Wisdom and Truth: 'I have come to reveal love, to bring love down to Earth. This is my mission.' 'Love is necessary for the rescuing of the world.' 'I believe that the living love and wisdom can change our life, our society and our homes.' 'You must realise that I have been sent by God ... to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth. God speaks through Christ, God speaks through me.'

Much teaching took place outside, in nature, with people camping out in all weathers. Deunov loved the mountains in particular and encouraged people to recognise that 'The mountains are reservoirs of energies which help people transform their mental states.' He also explained that 'People who understand the laws of the spiritual world have always made noetic use of the high peaks.'

This book offers the opportunity to learn at home, with chapters of The Master's quotations on God; The Noetic World; The Divine School; Master and Disciple; Fundamental Principles of Life and The Human Being. In a section on Methods, Rules and Recommendations for Life, practical guidance is given on aspects of living such as breathing, cleansing, sleep and nutrition as well as on prayer, contemplation and virtues. The chapter entitled Relations with Nature gives an understanding of the natural world which makes the teachings, as David points out, 'one of the first genuine eco-spiritual traditions.'

The final chapter looks to The New Epoch, of which Beinsa Douno says: 'At the present time, however, humanity is passing through a dark zone. The new epoch can be called an epoch of resurrection. Resurrection in this sense is nothing other than divine love awakening human consciousness and bringing it to life.' In his Foreword, Wayne Dyer sums the book up as 'a treasure house of Wisdom, Truth and Divine Love' and urges us 'to read and contemplate these simple yet profound principles.'

If you have ever wondered which book (apart from the Bible and Shakespeare) you would take to a desert island, this wise spiritual guide might just be the perfect companion.

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin

Irene Weinberg, *They Serve Bagels in Heaven: a story of love, eternity, and the cosmic importance of everyday life*

Self published, 2016, 162 pp, ISBN 10 1493618660 (pbk). £16.23

If you are not used to reading about information received from those who have passed over to Spirit, this is probably a good book with which to start because it is written in such a human way, with practicality, unlike some of the channelled books on the market. Although in one sense it is sentimental, it is so practical that it keeps you focused on the message. For some the content may seem far-fetched, and there is a distinct possibility that they would

either not buy the book in the first place, or that they would abandon it within the first few pages. I would urge those people to suspend their disbelief, keep an open mind, and read the whole thing; it is not a long book but it is packed with information that will help everyone in their lives whether or not they believe in the afterlife. This book tells of a great way to live in order to get the most out of life, regardless of what happens at the end of this lifetime for each of us.

The book is a touching and well-written account of two soul-mates who have incarnated together many times in order to achieve their mutual soul purpose. It contains a lot of humour and it carries you along at a fast pace. Saul gives his account and Irene weaves her story around this; I was confused at the start because there was no indication as to how Saul had imparted this information to Irene, but this is explained later in the book. Saul sounds as if he was quite a character in life and it is reassuring to hear that he remains a great character in spirit. You can almost hear his voice, and he doesn't pull his punches, so his account has that intensity and larger-than-life feeling that many Jewish people exhibit, making them wholly lovable.

The reason for writing this book is that Saul was taken to spirit early and was therefore unable to finish the work related to his soul purpose, although he had moved off the path that would take him in this direction before passing. He desperately sought to contact Irene so that he could have some further input into her life, to continue their work. Much of what is in here has been written in other books – in books on near-death and out-of-body experiences and channellings from Spirit, as well as some self-help books – but this book is written in what can only be described as such a unique way that it grabs your attention and makes you consider what it really means.

We often talk about how each of us has a soul purpose but most of us have no clue as to what it is and we just bumble through life in a daze. Basically, the ultimate soul purpose for all of us is exactly the same: to give and receive love and to learn to love ourselves unconditionally; in other words, with love that is not ego-based. This is coming directly from someone who has lived many times on the Earth, and who now has the huge amount of the knowledge and understanding that we will all have one day when we get back to Spirit. Saul's and Irene's experiences in different lives, separately and together, are distilled in this one book.

To quote Saul: 'Whatever else you might get from reading about our [Irene and Saul's] passions, tragedies, and comedies, I hope most of all that you will see the bottom-line truth: the love you give and receive in your life now can and *does* go on. The love you manage to stumble through for your parents, your neighbors, your children, or your spouse, no matter how imperfect, *can* help stop the force of cruelty in the world and can help you overcome any tragedy life hands you.'

It is obvious that few of us realise the influence we have, through our thoughts, words and deeds, on the rest of the people living on this planet. The nature of the energy we put out into the world and that which we have within us is of enormous importance in changing the way others think and take action. We are often urged to 'be the change' we wish to see happen in the world, but this book explains and enlarges on this so that it is easier to understand and

incorporate this message into each of our lives. Saul's and Irene's soul purpose is to bring this message to the attention of the world through this book, and through the way Irene lives her life now without Saul being physically with her (although, of course, he is definitely still with her in a spiritual sense, and taking as active a part in her life as possible).

This is an inspiring book that makes you stop and think, simply because it has been written by two ordinary people who have lived ordinary lives and made an impact on the universe. It underlines the fact that ordinary lives can still be extraordinary when love is lived through them quietly and effectively – no celebrity, no political or religious grandstanding, no ego. Everything is achieved through thoughts, words and everyday loving deeds, which is something we can all do and *know* that we are making a difference in this far from perfect world.

Reviewed by Howard Jones

**Pamela J. Steward and Andrew Strathern, *Ritual: key concepts in religion*
Bloomsbury 2014 ix 171pp. ISBN 978-1-44118-569-3 (pbk)**

This book, one of a number in Bloomsbury's 'Key Concepts' series, takes a social anthropological approach to ritual through a succinct overview of both early and contemporary conceptual theorizing on the subject. In their introduction the authors explore the issue of definition, referring to Roy Rappaport (performance, embodiment and ritual efficacy) and Catherine Bell (ritualisation, dynamics of framing and condensed totality, etc.). Linguistic theory is also called upon (J. L. Austin).

Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the founding fathers of the discipline, stressing evolutionary schemes and early *structural functionalist* viewpoints. Here we find Sir James Frazer, Emile Durkheim and his school, plus Arnold Van Gennep, but also the classicist writer Jane Ellen Harrison, representative of the Cambridge myth and ritual school. These thinkers were highly influential in their day, informing the work of T. S. Eliot and Robert Graves amongst others. Topics considered seriously by all these writers included magic, sacrifice, goddesses, matriarchy, seasonal rites, drama and much more.

However, they were all considered 'armchair theorists' and in Chapter 3 we encounter the fieldwork revolution led by Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Boas, and their methodology of *participant observation* among the Trobriand Islands, the Andaman Islanders and the Kwakiutl respectively. Such theorists took an ahistorical and non-evolutionary approach to their studies, aiming to be *nomothetic* [legislative] in scope. Boas was instrumental in laying the foundations for a four field anthropology including physical, archaeological and linguistic in addition to the socio-cultural.

The next chapter largely concentrates on Victor Turner's work among the Ndembu people of Northern Rhodesia. His work moves beyond the rather static expressions of structural functionalism to more dynamic templates of process, particularly with his 'liminality –

communitas' model of social structure developed from the ideas of Van Gennep. His work overall stresses the importance of performance, drama and the multi-vocality of symbols for any thorough understanding of ritual. He focussed on a wide range of topics including sacrifice and pilgrimage.

Chapter 5 brings us to the worship of the ancestors and, again, sacrifice (in relation to theories of exchange) where an exposition of Meyer Fortes work among the Tallensi of Ghana is given. Psychological interpretation of ritual is involved here (e.g. in the area of father and son antagonism) as is divination, the famous study of witchcraft among the Azande by E. E. Evans-Pritchard being cited as an example.

The authors bring the reader up to date in the following chapter entitled 'Contemporary approaches to ritual analysis'. Various thematic issues are provided to this end including ritual secrecy, ritual in its own right, ritual failure and ritual 'mistakes'. Problems of exegesis and hermeneutics in general, for modern fieldworkers and theorists alike, are cited here.

Chapter 7 sees a brief return to Turner (chapter 4) before Steward and Strathern introduce a plethora of additional terms, partly derived from linguistics or linguistic anthropology, but also from the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. So we find terms such as *locutionary*, *perlocutionary*, *habitus*, *hexis* and *misrecognition*. Such a superabundance of concepts I must admit was not to my liking and I found myself switching off, if not actually nodding off, while reading this chapter and the next labelled 'Cognitive approaches'.

More concepts assail the reader in this chapter, developed by cognitive scientists, which often need an acronym for brevity. Thus we have ADD, i.e. agency detection device, and HADD, i.e. hypersensitive agency detection device, (plus CST i.e. Costly Signalling Theory). Through Manuel Vasquez, whom the authors cite, we discover that 'religion is based on minimally counter-intuitive concepts or MCI', and that the idea of the sacred results from the 'affordances' that places offer to 'the culturally in-skilled embodied schemes' by means of which these affordances are given salience. In rather simpler language the authors stress that in understanding ritual, praxis should take priority over doxa, that is, performance (practice theory) over belief, a viewpoint which this reviewer shares, as does Graham Harvey in his book *Ritual and Religious Belief* (2005).

In the concluding chapter the writers make an appeal for grounded theory and synthetic forms of interpreting ritual, in order to reduce the split between what they term *internalist* and *externalist* approaches. They introduce the notion of *framing*, and pictures, as a way forward in this enterprise. The book finishes with two interesting appendices, both focussed on Taiwan. This book is very rich in ethnographic details and it particularly provides examples from research in Papua New Guinea and the South-West Pacific region. This is not unexpected given that the husband and wife team have published some 45 books and over 200 articles on their research in these areas. As can be seen above, it is even richer in the numerous concepts alluded to, both traditional and modern.

However, I have several problems with the book. Given their legitimate concern about indigenous interpretations of ritual compared with (participant) observers' analyses I am surprised that the distinction between '*emic*' (subjective accounts) and '*etic*' ('objective'

accounts) appears nowhere in their text apart from one fleeting reference to the latter on p.110. Given that this distinction was originally coined by linguist Kenneth Pike, in 1954, its omission is even odder. The same applies regarding the useful distinction between 'manifest' and 'latent' functions which never appears in their presentation of functionalist theorists. As to the matter of definition, despite Catherine Bell being mentioned several times, I feel she would have been better served if she had been included in their introductory chapter. She states for instance that:

an action(s) that is repeated, rule-bound behaviour, referring to an ongoing tradition or otherwise invoking a reference point transcending the choosing and acting individual; that it is performed behaviour, *executed with a heightened sense of being for display*, (my italics) to be especially attended to by participants and observers; that it is, wholly or partly non-instrumental or symbolic in nature; and that its communicative dimensions work primarily through 'condensing symbols' rather than elaborated speech, through connotation rather than denotation.¹

In terms of ritual secrecy, again I favour the Greek distinction between the *aporrheton*, secrets which *must not* be revealed and the *arrheton*, those things which *cannot* be revealed. Such distinctions as these if applied might have got the authors out of the sometimes convoluted discursiveness they appear to find themselves immersed in.

In summing up, I would say that this book is largely useful to undergraduates studying anthropology or religious studies, or someone, like myself, who needs a refresher in the area of ritual from this rather specialised point of view. But the interested lay person would certainly benefit too.

Reviewed by Ken Rees

¹ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992) and *Ritual: perspectives and dimensions* (1997). The first is published in New York; the second by OUP.

Mary Bowmaker, *The Reality of the Unbelievable*

UK, Courtenbede, 2016. 178 pp. ISBN 978 0 9554292 2 2 4 (pbk)

It would be a conceit, and clearly a mistake, to treat any review of this work as a critique. Without any valid personal reservations, nor without forsaking one's critical faculties, one simply cannot disagree with the title! From the wealth of material Mary has included in this relatively small book, surely no-one could dispute more than a very few of the many 'realities' given? As for the likely readership of *De Numine*, probably all would be content to believe the book's title was well-chosen and is totally justified by its 'content'. The chapters number seven, which may have been musically intentional, too? The reference section is adequately provided, but the predominance of biblical references in no way detracts from the script itself, for the aptness is 'all'. In short, it is a succinct and worthwhile read – for anyone.

One *could* level a mild criticism, of ‘repetition’, at the text, but it is for emphasis, aimed at any readers who may yet be doubtful about the realities recounted, and achieved in a very gentle way, not overpoweringly so. It was an easily-read tome, to me, and despite my unavoidable habit of *always* being in ‘proofreading’ mode, the few errors made it a joy to read ... a joy, that is, with one exception – a recurrent error, which arose four times, I think, and I leave to others to find for themselves.

Reviewed by Eric Cook

David Richo, *When Mary Becomes Cosmic: a Jungian and Mystical Path to the Divine Feminine*

Mahwah, US, Paulist Press, 2016. 144 pp. ISBN 978 0809149827 (pbk) \$16.95

I had a fast and bumpy ride with this book, finding it at first a little irritating and ‘heady’, potentially pretentious and complicated. However I read on and discovered a moving and profound understanding of Mary as Cosmic at my journey’s end. So it worked! The writer of this book is careful always to lay out the positive and negative/shadow aspects of this archetype for the sake of wholeness; my review will attempt to do the same ...

Author David Richo is described on the back cover as a retreat leader who lives in Santa Barbara and San Francisco, and who has written thirteen other books. He does not reveal much of himself in his writings, except for sharing a couple of inner voice whisperings he has experienced when relating/praying to Mary. He makes an isolated one-sentence reference to his 23 year-old son; I do prefer an author to declare who they are and where they are ‘coming from’ so I feel I am sharing their journey, and not being ‘taught’ or ‘preached at’. Instead Richo constantly uses ‘we and us’ in his writing as if speaking for all people, all of us, all the time. I imagine most of us may have other perspectives or be nowhere near his wave-length in relating to or even understanding what he is describing. My personal response was sometimes a ‘yes!’ of agreement and recognition, and sometimes a ‘no’ from my own different perspective. Richo leaves readers little of their own psychic space, in his use of a Jungian technique to keep interpreting, or telling us what an image or metaphor means. So that’s my ‘irritated’ response!

The ‘headiness’ is because the book gallops along on an academic, intellectual level – packed with information from all sorts of references and places. It is a lot to take in page after page without much breathing space. I found it difficult to go deeply into any of it with such a fast rhythm, and had to superficially skim the (possibly) lovely prayers which were written regularly after each new idea, and the lovely quotes from many different authors/spiritual teachers. There’s the fast and bumpy ride!

Now for the positives:

In the first chapter, Richo lays out his intention to bring together theology and depth psychology; to show us ways to access inner wholeness. He focuses on three ways of looking at Mary. First the historical person, found in the gospel and theology, often addressed as the

mediator with Christ. Secondly, Mary as the holder of the archetype of the divine feminine, the *source* of blessings – a spiritual energy of the Great Mother found in us and the entire cosmos. Thirdly, Mary the familiar *object of devotion* that has its origins in the early Church. In good Jungian style, Richo includes both masculine and feminine energies, and so we often look at Mary's relationship with Jesus – in accepting, renewing, revealing and holding us safe in birth and death. I loved the quote from Rumi, who succinctly said 'Our very body is Mary with a Jesus inside'.

Richo lays out three ways to pray:

- 1) From a distance *towards* the divine.
- 2) In relationship *with* the divine as an intimate twosome,
- 3) In maturity, embodying/*becoming* the Divine, where there is no separation, in Oneness.

We galloped through analyses and the meaning of another triad: Mary as Virgin (including historical beliefs in virgin births), Mother Mary, and Queen of Heaven Mary. As mentioned above, I greatly appreciated the way the author always reveals the Light and Dark aspects of these archetypes. Then we arrive at the main part of the book – expositions of fifteen mystical titles given to Mary in the Litany of Loreto. (I confess, as a non-Catholic, to have known nothing of this Litany, but in the absence of much information about it from the author, I researched a little to discover it is a deeply important Mariology prayer from around the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.) I found the words of the Litany included as an appendix at the end of the book, and feel it would have been more helpful had it been inserted earlier on.

We travelled through explanations of Mary as: Mirror of Justice, Seat of Wisdom, Cause of Our Joy, Spiritual Vessel, Vessel of Honour, Singular Vessel of Devotion, Mystical Rose, Tower of David, Tower of Ivory, House of Gold, Ark of the Covenant, Gate of Heaven, Morning Star, Health of the Sick, Refuge of Sinners, Comforter of the Afflicted, Help of Christians.

All very beautiful and diverse but leaving the reader giddy and over stuffed with imagery, meanings and interpretations. I said to myself 'well, with all of that we might as well say that Mary is everything.' And a reply from myself said 'exactly'.

A quote is given from the mystic Ramakrishna: 'Whatever is, is the Mother – isn't that so?'

I then understood that to give the book enough time and space I probably needed to spend at least a month with each of the different Litany titles – meditating, reflecting, drawing, noticing in nature etc. etc. in order to truly absorb or feel anything from all this information. But then – miraculously – I encountered the final Appendix, called 'A Retreat with Mary', where the author says 'a personal prayer retreat upgrades the reading of this book from information to contemplation, and the reader becomes more like Mary who "treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart"' (Luke 2:19). Yes indeed!

He suggests noticing the titles that most connect/resonate with you as an inspiration which may point to your calling, or notice new titles for Mary that arise in your consciousness, and write your own litany to Mary based upon what results; at last, from head to heart and

body... When I had finished the book and put it down, I drove my son to work at dawn. The eastern sky was filled with the deep red light of sunrise. An inner whisper came, 'Mary as Cloak of Red', and I felt my own new litany begin:

Mary, Cloak of Red
Hold me in your warm glow
Protect and surround me in your eastern rising light –
Exquisite beauty and hope of a new day
May I live and die in you.
Forever.

To write this review of 'When Mary Becomes Cosmic' I googled what 'cosmic' actually means – here are some given meanings: 'So pervasive and all-inclusive as to exist in or affect the whole world, planetary, universal, heavenly, celestial, infinitely or inconceivably extended, vast, omnipresent, all embracing, overarching, limitless, measureless'.

On the dawn of finishing this book, I did indeed open to a sense of Mary Becoming Cosmic – within and around.

Thank you David Richo.

Reviewed by Pamela Gaunt



Books Received for Review

Please see below the list of books we have received for review. If you would like to write a review of any of these, please contact **Marian MacPolin** – mmpolin@yahoo.co.uk – who will arrange for a copy to be sent to you. **Please send completed reviews to the Editor:** theotokos66@gmail.com copied to denumine@gmail.com

When we receive your review, the book will become yours. If you would like to review a book that is not on this list, please contact the Editor.

- | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Peter Brown | <i>The Cult of the Saints</i> | (University of Chicago Press, 2015) |
| Anselm K. Min (ed.) | <i>The Task of Theology: Leading Theologians on the Most Compelling Questions for Today</i> | (Orbis, 2015) |
| E. P. Lachence & P. Brunette | <i>The Earliest Franciscans</i> | (Paulist Press, 2015) |
| John Dear | <i>Thomas Merton, Peacemaker</i> | (Orbis, 2015) |
| Franklin H. Littell | <i>Understanding Early Christianity</i> | (Carta Jerusalem, 2015) |
| Betty R. Ferrell | <i>Spiritual, Religious, and Cultural Aspects of Care</i> | (OUP, 2015) |
| Philip J. Larkin | <i>Compassion: The Essence of Palliative and End-of-Life Care</i> | (OUP, 2015) |
| C. Coats, M.M. Emerich (eds.) | <i>Practical Spiritualities in a Media Age</i> | (Bloomsbury, 2016) |
| Roger Haight | <i>Spiritual and Religious: Explorations for Seekers</i> | (Orbis, 2016) |
| Jon Sweeney | <i>Ralph Waldo Emerson</i> | (Orbis, 2016) |
| Bettina E. Schmidt, ed., | <i>Study of Religious Experience: Methods and Approaches</i> | (Equinox 2016) |
| Bettina E. Schmidt | <i>Spirits and Trance in Brazil: An Anthropology of Religious Experience</i> | (Bloomsbury, 2016) |
| David L Mueller | <i>Karl Barth</i> | (Hendrickson, 2016) |
| S. Bullivant, E.O. Genilo,
D.F. Pilario, A.M. Brazal (eds.) | <i>Theology and Power: International Perspectives</i> | (Paulist Press, 2016) |
| Lamin O. Sanneh | <i>Beyond Jihad: The Pacifist Tradition in West African Islam</i> | (OUP, 2016) |
| Mark Juergensmeyer,
Margo Kitts, Michael Jerryson | <i>Violence and the World's Religious Traditions</i> | (OUP, 2017) |



AHT Events, 2017

Friday 24th March (6.00pm) to Sunday 26th March 2017 (2.00pm)

AHT Semi-Silent Retreat: Theme: *Exploring Spiritual Experience*

This retreat, open to people of all faiths, or none, will ask what we mean by 'spiritual experience' – a widely used, but often undefined term. Led by Marianne Rankin.

Venue: Launde Abbey.

Cost: £225

Enquiries and bookings: Tel. 01572 717254 email: info@launde.org.uk

Saturday 3rd June 2017 (10.30am – 4.00pm)

Alister Hardy Trust and British Teilhard Association joint Conference

Ecology, Science and Spirituality – Friends or Enemies? Building on the legacy of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Alister Hardy

10.30 am Registration

11.00 am Welcome from Stephen Retout, BTA

11.15 am Welcome from Marianne Rankin, AHT

11.30 am *Deep Ecology and Theistic Evolution*: Professor Keith Ward will refer to the work of Alister Hardy and Arne Naess

1.00 pm Please bring your own lunch or buy sandwiches nearby

2.00 pm *A Greater Love for the Earth and All Its People: Ecology and Spirituality in Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry*. Professor Ursula King will speak about the themes of ecology and spirituality in the work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry.

3.30 pm Discussion

4.00 pm Close

Cost: £20.00; £15.00 for AHT/BTA members; £5.00 for students

Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 112 Palace Gardens Terrace, London W8 4RT

Enquiries & bookings: Marianne Rankin: mariannerankin@icloud.com Tel: 07714 032643

Sunday 16th July 2017 (10.00am – 4.15pm)

RERC, School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies, & Research Cluster

'Spirituality, Health and Wellbeing' One day Conference: Spirituality, Therapy and Wellbeing

10.30 am Welcome by Professor Bettina Schmidt

10.45 am The Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture: Dr Wendy Dossett, Chester University: *'Spiritus contra spiritum': Spirituality and recovery from alcohol use disorder*

11.30 am Discussion

12.00 am Professor Bettina Schmidt and Dr Jeff Leonardi: *Spirituality within a Therapeutic context: A comparative study* (working title)

12.45 pm Lunch break (we regret that lunch will be not provided)

2.00 pm Dr Lymarie Rodriguez: *Spirituality in Therapy* (working title)

2.45 pm Patricia Souza, PUC SP, Brazil: *Religion, food and wellbeing* (working title)

3.30 pm Dr Thomas Jansen: *Embodied Spirituality: Food and Fasting in Chinese Buddhism*

Venue: Old Hall, UWTSd, Lampeter

The conference is open to the public. No charge.

Enquiries to: merc@uwtsd.ac.uk

Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th September 2017

Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey. Theme: *From Our Own Experiences*. We will be welcoming short talks from the participating members.

Cost: £100 per person (£115 for non-members).

Contact: Mary Cook by phone: 07794294432 or email: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Saturday 14th October 2017, 10.30 am – 4.00 pm

Alister Hardy Trust Members Day

The 2017 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture: *Religionless Spirituality and the Spiritual Experience in Music* by Reverend Professor June Boyce-Tillman.

The afternoon will include a Members' Update and Feedback Session.

There will be a Book Fair with AHT authors speaking about and selling their books.

Venue: Oxford Quaker Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LW Tel: 01865 557373

Enquiries and bookings: email mariannerankin@icloud.com

Local Groups:

Oxford and Area Group:

Our Area meetings are six times a year and rotate around the nine constituent Local Meetings: Abingdon, Burford, Charlbury, Faringdon, Headington, Marlborough, Oxford, and Swindon.

Contact: Tanya Garland 01865 244260 tanya.garland.37@gmail.com

North Wales Group:

Meetings tend to be organised at short notice and are announced on www.meetup.com/Bangor-Beyond/

Venue: Usually Bangor University

Contact: Keith Beasley, keith@keithbeasley.co.uk (see also pages 30-31)

S. E. Wales group:

Thursday 23rd March 2017

Alan Underwood: *The attraction of opposites – a bit of this and that*

Thursday 22nd June 2017

Mary Cook: *Are animals aware of the world of spirit?*

Thursday 21st September 2017

Ken Price: *The 21st century Shaman*

Thursday 14th December 2017

Val Evans: *Historical figures who had special relationships with animals*

Outings to be arranged

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



Other Events

Friday 7th April to Sunday 9th April 2017

The Scientific and Medical Network: 40th SMN Mystics and Scientists Conference

The Continuing Quest for Unity and Integration: The Spirit of Science and the Science of the Spirit – 40 Years On Speakers: Prof Ravi Ravindra; Dr Fritjof Capra will participate by Skype; Prof Marilyn Monk; Dr Merlin Sheldrake; Dr Jude Currivan

Music by Merlin and Cosmo Sheldrake

Cost: Residential £320.00

<https://explore.scimednet.org/index.php/events/event/40th-anniversary-mystics-and-scientists-conference/>

Wednesday 12th April 2017 10:30am – 4:30pm

CANA *Is there a life beyond death? Near-Death Experiences give us a sense of the Beyond*, with Jeff Olsen

Venue: Essex Unitarian Church, 122 Palace Gardens, Kensington. London W8 4RT (near Notting Hill tube station).

Cost: £35; concessions £28.

Booking: www.christiansawakening.org

or contact Denise Moll at denise.newleaf@phoncoop.coop or 01932 343 614

Dates in **April and May**

William Bloom: *Spring Workshops* in Glastonbury

<http://williambloom.com/workshops/>



Rules of the Alister Hardy Trust

The object of the Alister Hardy Trust is to advance the education of the public in religious and spiritual experience, its nature, function, frequency and purport. It will promote research into religious and spiritual experience and publish the useful results of such research for the public benefit.

1. Membership of the Alister Hardy Trust is open to all those in sympathy with its aims and objectives. All subscribing members must abide by the rules of the Trust and support its aims and objectives. An official complaints procedure exists to protect members and officers and agreement to abide by this procedure is a requirement of membership. Membership will cease if subscriptions are unpaid. In addition, membership may be terminated if rules are breached. Members may vote at any General Meeting of the Trust.
2. Subject to the approval of the Trustees, local groups may be formed. Such groups must be self-financing and set up and maintain their own bank or building society accounts, and shall maintain close links with the Trust. Group leaders (or conveners) may be elected democratically by members of their groups. Candidates for group leaders (or conveners) must be members in good standing with a minimum of 1 year's membership of the Trust. The Trust may offer assistance in the setting up of such groups and assist in making contact between members. Funding to start new groups of the Trust *may* be available at the discretion of the Trustees and following an application submitted via the committee.
3. The Trust must ensure that a register is kept of names and addresses of the members, subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act, 1998.
4. The Membership and Activities Group (a sub-committee of the Trust) will conduct the day to day business of the Trust and shall consist of at least one Trustee. In any dispute the decision of the Chair of Trustees (and any appointed sub-committee of officers) is final and binding.
5. The day to day business of the Trust shall be carried out by its officers. These shall include: an Honorary Secretary who shall be responsible for convening the meetings of the Trust and for preparing agenda and minutes of meetings, and a Membership Secretary who shall be responsible for maintaining membership and subscription records and filing systems,
6. All elected officers of the Trust shall be honorary appointments, though appropriate expenses may be reimbursed with the agreement of the Trustees.
7. If any local, regional or national groups of the Trust depart from the aims of the Society, the Trustees may withdraw their use of the name, 'The Alister Hardy Trust'. Any remaining group funds must be returned to the Honorary Treasurer.
8. These rules may be amended by resolutions of the Alister Hardy Trust at an Annual General Meeting or specially convened meeting.
9. Annual General Meetings: The first AGM under the Charitable Incorporated Organisation [CIO] must be held within 18 months of its creation and thereafter at intervals

not exceeding 15 months. Notice of an AGM must be given with 14 clear days' notice and must include the date, time and place where the AGM will be held. The AGM should be chaired by the elected Chair or in his/her absence another officer agreed by the Trustees. The AGM can proceed if a quorum numbering 5% (or 3 members) is in attendance. Voting at the AGM can be by a show of hands. A poll can be by postal or electronic means.

10. In addition an AGM must be called if 10% of the membership request it. The Trustees must call that meeting within 21 days of such a request and hold it within 28 days of the call.

11. Appointment of Trustees: The Trust shall number at least 4 Trustees, but no more than 12 in total. Three Trustees shall be elected by the membership (i.e. 1 per year in rotation). One Trustee shall be a member of the Hardy family. A further 8 Trustees may be appointed subject to the criteria determined by the Trust under paragraph 12 (2) of the CIO. At every AGM one third of Trustees shall stand down in rotation. Postal Votes and electronic (email) votes in relation to the election of Trustees must be supervised independently of the CIO.

12. The rules should be read in conjunction with the Constitution of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation called 'The Alister Hardy Trust' and do not affect any clauses in that document.



Alister Hardy Trust – Complaints Procedure

Background

The complaints procedure for the Alister Hardy Trust (hereafter called 'The Trust') is intended to address complaints received from members and made against other members, officers, or the appointed Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer or Communications Officer.

Procedure

a) Complaints must be made in writing (or via electronic mail) and be addressed to the serving Chair (except in the circumstances outlined in sub section 1).

b) The Chair at his or her discretion may appoint a sub-committee to assist with the investigation of the matter. This sub-committee will be made up of one or more of those officers serving on the Board of Trustees.

c) Parties to any complaint will assist with the investigation and supply any and all materials deemed relevant to the complaint to the Chair upon request.

d) The following timescales will apply to this procedure:

A period of fourteen (14) days to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and inform all parties.

A period of thirty one (31) day updates to be given to the complainant(s) regarding the progress of the investigation.

e) A full written report of the investigation to be prepared and archived with the Trust. A summary report to be given to the complainant(s).

f) Resolutions:

i) Informal Resolution – arbitration procedure between the parties involved to be conducted through the Chair.

ii) Formal Warning – should a complaint be substantiated then a written formal and recorded warning may be given, a copy of which will be retained by the Trust.

iii) Removal of Membership – in the event of a serious misconduct being established, or in the event of a previous warning being ignored, the member may be required to leave the Trust and their membership revoked (including any member serving in any capacity as an officer or Trustee).

Sub Section 1

Complaints should be forwarded via the serving Chair other than where the Chair is the subject of the complaint. In this case the complaint should be forwarded to the serving Vice Chair. If a complaint is made against both the serving Chair and Vice Chair then the complaint should be forwarded to the Honorary Secretary.

Caveat: This procedure is intended to deal with internal complaints within the Trust, should they arise. Complaints of a criminal nature should be passed to the relevant external authorities.



Summer

Summer, in its fullness,
Is the glory of the unfolding year,
When buds burst into song, birds sing,
Sunshine swells the ripening grain,
Quickens the human heart,
Warms back into life
The awaiting earth.

All is movement in the great theatre of becoming.
The Sun, Lord of long days,
Rises high in the sky
To bless us, bring us treasured moments
Of hopeful expectation, new life blossoming,
Scents of rose bud and honeysuckle,
Bright tapestry of noon-day colours,
The stillness of a drowsy summer's evening.

Here there is time to gather in earth's loveliness,
Rise above the frenzied moments,
The man-made madness
Of false pretence and empty longings.
Here we can join company
With lush green-growing grass
Sea-side days, the great wildness
Of moor and mountain, butterflies and sea-spray,
Gorgeous garments of arboreal majesty
The riotous growth of profligate profusion
That will succour and feed us
Through the turning year.

We would linger in Summer's embrace
But time forbids. The season passes.
Like as with all things, we must let go,
Brave the arms of nature, our blessed divinity,
Our mother-ship that takes us forward on our journey,
Holding us, as the earth speeds around the sun
And the work of the harvester is done

Jonathan Robinson

