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EDITORIAL

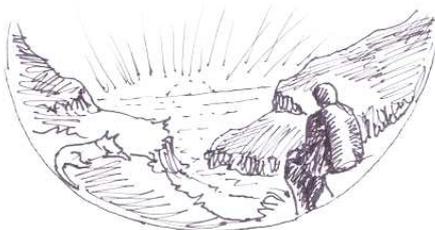
Welcome to the first 50th Anniversary edition of *De Numine*. We have received some wonderfully diverse and interesting contributions, which are contained in a supplement beginning on page 13. Preceding this is Desmond Morris' obituary sent to us by Sir Alister's family which we felt a fitting tribute to precede our own. The article by Dr Ken Davies before this is a comprehensive review of the science/ spirituality debate so central to the work of the RERC, the resolution of which Sir Alister saw as an essential part of his endeavour.

Presenting this issue, in which contributors cover so much of the history of the Alister Hardy enterprise and offer such a wealth of experience, has been enthralling and challenging; one cannot help but be daunted by the responsibility. The theme in this issue is of course taken from the remit of the RERC and the specific content of the archive, but as Mary Cook and others point out, subjective experience is unique to the individual, so finding common themes, as I always somehow do, has been especially intriguing.

One theme that struck me is the inadequacy of language to convey things of the spirit. Some time ago I asked in an editorial what had happened to the soul in our religious imaginations. Is it an outdated concept in a time when traditional religious beliefs are giving way to the individual spiritual quest? In our search for a redefinition of consciousness to encompass interconnectedness and unity (and an increased social awareness and concern for our environment?), has the concept of soul somehow expanded to become Sheldrake's morphic field? Although 'soul', and 'field' in this context, are not synonymous, they could point to the evolution of an idea, from a personalised concept to a theory that scientists might well take on board. Germane to this is the ongoing science /spirituality debate so ably reviewed by Ken Davies, and the way words come with connotations and emotional resonances. Ken talks of 'faith in harmony with science', John Franklin speaks of 'the faith that places love and unity as the primal spiritual law, one that should take precedence over and above the arguments that divide us'. In this gentler approach to the aim which is so central to the remit bequeathed us by Alister Hardy, are there reasons to hope for a greater recognition of common ground?

This brings me to the motivation and emotional involvement of workers in the field (sic). Ken Davies and Mark Fox both describe themselves as explorers – Mark experiences his research in the archive as travelling in 'a massive and still largely unknown continent'. This spirit of enquiry seems to me to demonstrate the same excitement in discovery of the unknown, and wonder at the worlds still to be explored, that motivated Sir Alister; I feel he would have been delighted with them both.

Patricia Murphy



'Sir Alister contemplates the life that lies hidden
in the ocean depths'

Juliet Greenwood

ARTICLE

Dr Ken Davies writes

Being a scientist who found spirituality almost by chance, natural curiosity has led me to an exploration of the scientific arguments. This is not a report on systematic research, as I have merely followed my dilettante instincts and poked my nose down any alley as and when it presented itself, reading books others bought me or titles that simply turned my head. It is a kind of intellectual hobby, but enough data has been accumulated for an article, and below is a flavour of what I want to say.

Science and Spirituality

Introduction

For the sake of clarity, science is defined here as an approach to seeking knowledge via careful observation, measurement, model-building, or replicable empiricism, monitored by peer evaluation. Spirituality, on the other hand, is defined as a feeling, consideration or belief that true knowledge has to go beyond the material to embrace wider possibilities. These necessarily include such phenomena as clairvoyance, near-death experiences or anything that presents a challenge to materialistic, reductionist interpretations of life and death. We thus enter an area shot through with practices and beliefs ranging from the frivolous to the downright fraudulent, and this makes any serious examination difficult.

There seem to be five aspects to the issues under discussion: (1) science poses challenges to ideas and beliefs about spirituality; (2) but aspects of spirituality also challenge science; (3) the media tend not to draw the attention of the public to the fact that scientists frequently support and defend spiritual ideas; a number of physicists have felt compelled by their own evidence to consider wider possibilities, sometimes actually wandering into the realm of metaphysics; (4) thus it can be said that when scientists challenge each other, a bi-product is a degree of scientific support for a pattern of thinking we may call spiritual; (5) unsurprisingly, in the light of the above, there have been attempts to seek a synthesis of science and spirituality, sometimes by scientists. These five aspects form a framework for this paper.

(1) Science Challenging Spirituality

In the popular eye science is seen as posing major challenges to notions spiritual, largely because the media over-report these views, distorting the debate. The most widely publicised scientist to take an anti-spiritual stance is the biologist Richard Dawkins, who has come to be regarded as a something of a high priest of atheism, vigorously proselytising for the banishment of any thinking not based on his view of pure reason and/or science.¹ His views have attracted considerable media attention, but they do not so much challenge the concept of spirituality, as question the rationality of those who believe in such things.

The psychologist Richard Wiseman, who is endorsed by Dawkins, prefers to rummage in the findings of psychology for the reasons why spiritual and paranormal ideas persist. He poses an oblique challenge by scrutinising a range of paranormal phenomena like psychic readings, out-of-body experiences, mediums' messages from the deceased, and prophecy.² Wiseman has been a performance magician, and is thus well aware of the kinds of perceptual tricks available

to performers and fraudsters alike. These correlate with a host of psychological findings which Wiseman uses to offer explanations for our apparent gullibility. For example, we are programmed by evolution to perceive and seek patterns, and our perceptions can mislead us. A number of exercises show how easy it is to fool people, including getting spurious but credible articles into academic journals. One wonders what this says for the ultimate scientific test, peer review!

Whereas Wiseman's work is useful in exposing charlatans, and there are plenty of 'men of straw' available, no attempt is made to explain the findings of serious workers who find support for the veracity of spiritual phenomena. The greatest challenges facing anti-spiritual views come from within Science itself. Alistair McGrath's excellent response to Dawkins³ is not so much a challenge to Science, as an exposé of the sheer scientific incompetence of Dawkins' approach. He shares Terry Engleton's comparison of *The God Delusion* with somebody holding forth on biology when his only knowledge is derived from a reading of *The British Book of Birds*.⁴ Our discussion of Dawkins' thesis can rest there.

(2) Spirituality Challenging Science

The Spirituality camp has no need to confine itself to defensive arguments, as the natural historian Andrew Parker's book, *The Genesis Enigma*⁵ demonstrates with considerable force. Its real force lies in the monumental challenge the creation story in the book of Genesis poses for Science. The scientific account tells us that the universe began some 13,700 million years ago with something resembling a great explosion. Around 5,000 million years ago the sun was formed, followed 800 million years later on planet Earth by the seas and the appearance of land areas. Primitive plants followed 300 million years after that. Things really got going when the first eye developed (around 521 million years ago), followed by the development of moving life in the water, with all the animal phyla that exist today evolving their characteristic forms. Following this, land animals adapted to avoid the vision of their predators, except for birds which, being able to escape by flight, had no need to do so, explaining why birds which fly can afford to be so colourful.

It is worthy of comment that the presumed scientific demolition of the biblical account has been focused on the age of the earth and the time the whole process took, as opposed to the biblical seven days. This has overshadowed the remarkable fact that the Genesis account could easily be a modern summary of the scientific findings. Events unfold in precisely the same order. First came light (the sun), then the separation of land from water, followed by the development of grass and herb yielding seed. The division of day from night came next followed by moving life '*brought forth by the waters.*' The winged creatures came last. The parallels are, in fact, astounding, going far beyond the possibility of chance correlations.

Certain points of detail are extremely interesting: That light led to the formation of the solar system is not remarkable in itself, being an intuitively satisfying start, but in the context of the whole it is remarkable. The waters exist first, then are separated from the land, tying up with modern scientific understanding, as does the claim that life began with grasses, the herbal seed and the fruit trees yielding fruit. Plant life had to emerge first to oxygenate the atmosphere. The appearance of lights in the heavens correlates sequentially with the evolution of the first eye, a truly astonishing parallel with science. The next step is the emergence of moving creatures to teem in the waters. We have to begin wondering how the writer of Genesis got it so very right

as this is the Cambrian period, biology's 'big bang.' Things get more remarkable when the larger creatures follow, evolving from tiny ones to emerge from the sea. Just as in the scientific version, the birds come last. The writer of Genesis, like science, saw birds as a special case, and this is on top of his remarkable account of the pre-eminence of the sea. The question of how the writer, living in one of the most landlocked areas on earth, could possibly have stumbled on such a truth is itself an enigma.

(3) Science in Support of Spirituality

David Pond⁶ began his career as a scientist, conducting research into astrology. He found correlations between the outcomes of scientific personality tests and the personality predictions of sun signs. These findings are acknowledged by the scientific community, even by the arch sceptic Eysenck⁷. Oddly, Pond maintains that spirituality does not lend itself to scientific scrutiny and that the two subjects lie in mutually incompatible realms, and this position is worthy of discussion. As early as 1944, the quantum physicist Max Planck argued that to explain everything we must assume the existence of a conscious, intelligent mind.⁸ The American theoretical physicist John Wheeler⁹ suggests that we might live in a world created by consciousness itself, an idea rendered more exciting when combined with David Bohm's conviction that the universe works like a grand cosmic hologram, contained in a smaller scale within every portion of itself. Thus the whole universe would be contained within every one of us, leading to the possibility that we ourselves are its creator.

Scientific method has been employed to explore some of the issues, finding clear evidence that we must go beyond conventional materialism to explain them. Dean Radin was a concert violinist, an electrical engineer and educational psychologist before becoming a prominent researcher into the paranormal. His book, *The Noetic Universe*¹⁰ covers a tremendous amount of ground in a remarkable amount of detail to show that we must go beyond the material to explain roughly the same range of phenomena covered by Wiseman. He uses *Psi* as a shorthand for the human capacity for extrasensory perception (perceiving information without the use of the five senses). He submits virtually all the respectable evidence for *Psi* to rigorous testing with a statistical technique called meta-analysis. Highly significant support is found for all manifestations with experimental evidence drawn from work with playing cards, sketches, randomly selected pictures and various versions of the Ganzfeld technique. This is a carefully designed double blind experimental procedure, where the subject is placed in a sealed chamber, creating an unchanging sensory field. An assistant randomly selects a pack of four pictures from a pool of packs, and passes it to a 'sender' in another sealed chamber. The sender tries to transmit the target picture telepathically. The subject is then given the four pictures and is required to select the one which most accurately represents her/his thoughts during the experiment. The hit rate should be 25% but is actually 70%. Radin's evidence can be dismissed only by the most blinkered sceptic.

An easier read is Arthur J Ellison's account of his own work, which blends scientific and experiential approaches to offer a comprehensive account of a range of paranormal phenomena.¹¹ With scrupulous impartiality, Ellison examines experiences of near-death, being out of one's body, lucid dreaming, hypnotic trance, life beyond death, séances and paranormal healing. The key feature of both these workers is the exposure of jewels of hard evidence in support of the paranormal shining out from the morass of equivocal literature that makes hard-line materialism look so plausible.

The psychiatrist and philosopher Raymond Moody¹² studied a very large body of data from people who experienced near-death experiences. All report some or all of a number of phenomena, including feelings of peace, a dark tunnel, the presence of spiritual beings, a being of light, a panoramic view of life and a sense of reaching a border or limit. Reviewing the range of possible explanations, scientific and paranormal, he concludes none are really satisfactory and that the questions remain open. Psychologists in their role as scientists are on the whole regarded as sceptical about psychic events; one exception is the late David Fontana¹³ who spent most of his professional life studying psychic phenomena, in particular the question of life after death. Focusing on the most reliable evidence, his studies took in mediums, apparitions, haunting and reincarnation, as well as near-death and out-of-body experiences. He concludes that all the evidence indicates either human deception backed by gullibility or at least the partial existence of psychic abilities, opening the way for the argument that evidence for the existence of psychic abilities can only be rejected on doctrinaire grounds. Other workers are similarly assertive in their support for the veracity of spiritual beliefs. The physicist John Polkinghorne and his philosopher colleague Nicholas Beale¹⁴ are keen to promote the harmony between science and their Christian beliefs. They argue that the idea that most objects in the universe are mechanical, and that the brain determines its own behaviour are both fundamentally mistaken. Their discussion of the anthropic principle – the existence of six cosmic constants necessary to the development of life* – demonstrates just how speculative are most proposed answers to the really big questions. The argument for these six constants, like the ratio between the strength of the electrical forces that hold an atom together and the strength of gravity, is a long shot indeed.

Theoretical quantum physicist Amit Goswami and his colleagues¹⁵ take us back to basics by pointing out that the conventionally accepted model of the universe, based on the primacy of matter and the objectivity of the observer, with consciousness as an epiphenomenon of the human mind-brain, can no longer be considered sound, and has led us down a philosophical blind alley. Quantum Physics puts the first two under serious strain, and no evidence can be found for the third. Only a quantum model is considered fitted to the task, and by postulating the primacy of consciousness and defining the mind-brain as a measuring device with both quantum and classical properties, the authors demonstrate how the universe can be seen as a function of unitive consciousness, and the properties of the observer's mind/brain. They go beyond this to show how the process generates ego and the illusion of the independent Self, before using the theory to examine Psychology, War and Peace, Creativity, Mysticism, Ethics, and Spiritual Joy. This is a liberating book, well worth the struggle with unfamiliar technicalities and concepts. Mainstream views of Science, Religion and ourselves are put firmly in their place.

Taking a different tack, the biologist Lanza¹⁶ argues that traditional assumptions regarding the emergence of life and consciousness from inert matter have led us to a dead-end in understanding the universe by placing the cart before the horse. Knowledge of cosmic processes, like the birth of stars and how viruses replicate themselves, has yielded a myriad of technological advances leading to bigger and better bridges to understanding and the cure of

* in general terms the cosmological principle that theories of the universe are constrained by the necessity to allow for human existence. (Ed.)

more diseases. However, a review of classical science's basic take on the nature of the cosmos reveals that nothing of import can be said on any of the big questions, from the origins of life and consciousness to what preceded the Big Bang.

Lanza and Berman propose a radical bio-centric model which sees no separate physical universe outside of life and consciousness. Nothing is real that is not perceived. There was never a time when an external, dumb physical universe existed, or that life sprang randomly from it at a later date. Space and time exist only as constructs of the mind, as tools of perception. This model is able to explain the weird findings of quantum physics where the presence of the observer influences the outcome of experiments and whether matter presents itself as a wave or a particle.

(4) Science Challenging Science

At a more eclectic level, scientists who have no particular spiritual axe to grind confront their materialistic colleagues with awkward questions which do not fit neatly into mainstream paradigms. A lively collection has been compiled by Lyall Watson,¹⁷ a polymath with doctorates in ethology and anthropology as well as degrees in six other sciences including chemistry. He works at the edges of science, searching for the truth to be found behind legends. Each of the twelve essays in his delightful book, *The Dreams of Dragons*, throws up a large number of challenges. Whereas Wiseman sees our capacity to perceive patterns as a possible explanation for superstitious beliefs, Watson sees their existence where there should be none as a problem for science. People in Bavaria who perform a chanting ritual achieve crop yields 30% better than those who do not. Under strict experimental conditions, a Hungarian psychic is able to achieve superior growth rates for barley at a level that exceeds chance by 1000 to 1. If evolution favours the most successful, why are the Boskopoid* people extinct? In the long run science may produce answers to these questions, but we all know what Keynes¹⁸ said about the long run. It is more likely that an extension of our current paradigm will be needed to furnish plausible answers.

The British cosmologist and astrophysicist Paul Davies¹⁹ calls the anthropic principle 'the Goldilocks Factor,' and life itself 'the fifth miracle.' He points out that if life is the consequence of an incidental quirk of fate then (quoting the French biologist Jacques Monod)²⁰ neither our destiny nor our duty has been written down. But if it transpires that life emerged more-or-less on cue, as part of the deep lawfulness of the cosmos, it hints at a universe with purpose. In short, the origin of life is the key to the meaning of life.

This section cannot close without mentioning James Lovelock.²¹ Lovelock does not overtly promote spirituality, despite the provocative naming of his overall thesis, the Gaia Hypothesis. A practical engineer and empirical scientist, his concern is not about abstractions or faith, but with the damage we are inflicting upon the earth. His greatest insight is the fact that the earth consistently maintains optimum conditions for the maintenance of life, ruthlessly eliminating

* The Boskop Man is an anatomically modern human fossil of the Middle Stone Age (Late Pleistocene) discovered in 1913 in South Africa. The fossil was at first described as *Homo capensis* and considered a separate human species by Broom (1918), but by the 1970s it was widely recognized as representative of the modern Capoid (Khoi-San, at the time known as Hottentots and Bushmen) type. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boskop_Man)

life-forms which interfere negatively with the process. Without invoking spirituality, that we should hold our planet sacred is implicit. It is we, humanity, who are in mortal danger, not the earth herself. The subtitle of his latest book is 'a final warning.'

(5) Synthesists

Alan Underwood²² has already drawn our attention to an apparently paradoxical commonality between the tendency of science, in an attempt to achieve an ordered and coherent world view, to divide and categorise the phenomena of the world, and religion which, on the other hand, seeks to unify and find a common underpinning or source from which all phenomena draw their being. He points out that the fundamentalists of both camps can be viewed as having a conservative bent, preferring to have faith in their own fixed beliefs. To counter this he points up the similarity between Buddhist Koans and mathematical formulae, and a number of ways in which scientific method and spiritual approaches correlate.

Similar insights have prompted numerous other syntheses. For example, the teachings of the mystic Maharishi Mahesh Yogi²³ inspired a very large number of experiments into the effects of meditation (see Russell 1978²⁴ for a sample). The spiritual researcher Gregg Braden²⁵ has formulated twenty principles describing the way we interact with the universe, drawing on quantum physics and Buddhist mysticism. Deepak Chopra, too, can be considered a synthesist, having written volumes drawing on ancient Vedic wisdom and his own experiences as a medical practitioner. The cell biologist Bruce Lipton²⁶ has boldly drawn together insights from cellular biology, quantum physics, and brain function, including our understanding of placebo, nocebo and the importance of mindset in successful treatment of and recovery from sickness and trauma. Considering himself a spiritual scientist, he seeks to draw spirituality and science together to create a new paradigm which works towards an understanding of the natural order rather than the domination of it.

Conclusion

After reading these works, it has to be concluded that science and spirituality are not nearly as far apart as the media have led the popular mind to believe. Not only do science and spirituality share much, but scientists are by no means unequivocally opposed to spirituality. Whilst science poses challenges to ideas and beliefs about spirituality, many aspects of spirituality also challenge science. Scientists like Polkinghorne for instance find that their faith can sit quite comfortably with their own scientific world view, whilst others, like Gardner and Davies, feel compelled by their own evidence to go beyond the prevailing scientific evidence to explain it. Yet others, like Goswami and Lanza feel the need to challenge and change the current scientific paradigm itself, whilst Lipton, Chopra and Braden seek bold syntheses. The bibliographies of these visionaries' books reveal a host of scientists whose work poses a challenge to the popular view of the relationship between science and spirituality. The paradigm shift is actually on its way.

The media tend not to draw the attention of the public to these intricacies, creating the illusion of irreconcilable dilemmas, and for me this very fact opens up a surprising personal paradox. Intellectually stimulating though the debate may be, I must confess that the arguments have not been necessary to my *experience* of spirituality. They have however opened my eyes to an infinite range of possibilities, and they also provide me with a certain intellectual gratification and a degree of hope for the future. The insights of many, in particular Wheeler and Bohm,

helped me understand my feelings of both containing the universe and of being responsible for it. Lipton's work has influenced my work as a Reiki healer. But in an important sense, they added as much mystery as enlightenment to my personal experience of a developing spirituality. It is a paradox, and I find myself in concordance with Pond in feeling that spiritual development and scientific endeavour, whilst similar, are really quite distinct from one another. But the link between them is clearly definable, as illustrated by Alan Underwood when he points out that

This 'eastern' world-view was largely established and verified, again on 'objective' observation of a persisting inner world, through reproducible meditative methods tested and confirmed by countless practitioners century after century. The attitude adopted here, of observing the inner world with an emphasis on personal verification and repeatability under constrained 'experimental' conditions, is one that I would argue has striking similarities to the scientific approach.

My own experience of the growth of spirituality mirrors this insight in being a kind of empirical process in itself, bringing profound insights into both my own nature and that of the cosmos. It seems to me that, despite these clear similarities of method, spirituality exists at the level of feelings, whereas scientific knowledge exists at the level of intellect. Yet I keep experiencing insights that are in themselves as ineffable as koans, and it is thrilling to find explanations in the scientific literature. The paradox lies in the fact that I was never in search of rock-bottom truths, finding a profound satisfaction in the path itself. I did not seek or find spirituality; it found me, and there is a curious thrill in simply not knowing. I find this paradox itself profoundly exhilarating. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you.

Ken Davies

'The process of philosophic and scientific enlightenment has shaken the stability of beliefs held explicitly as articles of faith.' (Michael Polyani, 1891 – 1976, chemist and polymath)

Polyani posited a pre-knowledge of scientifically provable discoveries, otherwise 'what we prove will exist only in preconceived paradigms of knowledge' He believes that the empirical verification insisted on by scientists ignores the prevalence of the 'hunch' in scientific breakthroughs. This phenomenon, which he calls 'tacit knowledge', is a part of the scientific process of discovery that is not verifiable, but which precedes and underlies it. (Ed.)

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- ²⁶ Lipton, B. H. (2005) *The Biology of Belief*. Mountain of Love/Elite Books



Biologist with a broader outlook

Alister Hardy's death last week robs Oxford of one of its great scientific personalities. Even though he was only nine months short of his ninetieth birthday, he was far too young to die. His body was the only part of him that had aged. His enthusiasm, his humour, his curiosity and his intellect were as youthful as ever. A few years ago I described him as '85 going on 21' and he was delighted. Somehow he had managed to escape almost entirely the mental ageing process that slows down so many people in their seventies and eighties.

Right to the end he was busily working away at new ideas, new projects and new books. His last book was completed so recently that it will not appear until the autumn. Its topic is ballooning — just one of the many subjects which attracted his lively, inventive mind.

Although he made his scientific reputation as a brilliant marine biologist, he was at heart a wide-ranging Victorian naturalist, fascinated by a much broader spectrum. This, combined with a natural warmth and energy, made him the perfect professor for those of us lucky enough to be members of his department. He literally brought the old zoology department at Oxford to life by filling it with living animals, tanks of fish in the corridors, a huge aviary of birds covering the roof and even a complete termites' nest, full of termites, carefully shipped in from abroad to grace the central courtyard. Compared with Hardy's animated domain, other zoology departments always seemed to be boringly clinical and unstimulating.

As a new arrival at his department in 1951 I was invited to take tea with him at his North Oxford house. There, I and several other newcomers were regaled with amazing anecdotes, full of impish humour, culminating in his famous 'mermaid story'.

It began with a description of a stuffed mermaid which an old sailor had brought to England from some faraway island and continued with details of how this sailor and all subsequent owners of the mermaid had suffered terrible and inexplicable misfortunes. Then, with a melodramatic flourish, a beaming Hardy plunged his arm behind his chair and held the mummified mermaid aloft in front of us. 'Now it is in my hands', he cried, defying the fates to do him harm. It was a fascinating object, fashioned long ago from the front end of a monkey and the rear end of a large fish, and it was curiously symbolic of one of Hardy's most controversial theories, namely that our ancient ancestors went through a semi-aquatic phase of evolution before they took to hunting large animals on dry land.

This idea, now known as the 'Aquatic Ape Theory' came to him suddenly in the summer of 1930, not long after he had returned from several years at sea on the 'Discovery', as Chief Zoologist on a prolonged Antarctic expedition. He had become familiar with the thick layers of

An appreciation of Sir Alister Hardy by Dr Desmond Morris

blubber that protect marine mammals and it came to him in a flash one day that human beings also had 'blubber' — a generous layer of fat beneath the skin, which other primates lack. He also noticed that the hair tracts of man differ from those of other species of monkeys and apes, the human tracts following a uniquely streamlined pattern.

These two observations were stowed away in his fertile mind for thirty years. Then, in 1960, he was invited to address a sub-aqua club in Brighton and decided to put forward his hypothesis that our ancestors had originally become human, not on the plains, but in the rock-pools. There, he believed, they developed their taste for meat and began to use simple stone tools to open succulent shellfish. It was this, he claimed, that equipped them to graduate into fully fledged hunters at a later date, and conquer the world.

His audience responded, he recalled, with shock and surprise. The national press took up the story, claiming that he had said mankind was descended from dolphins. Hardy was horrified, and his more orthodox colleagues insisted that he drop the idea completely, for the sake of his scientific reputation. Characteristically, he refused to be put off and even published a short paper on the subject.

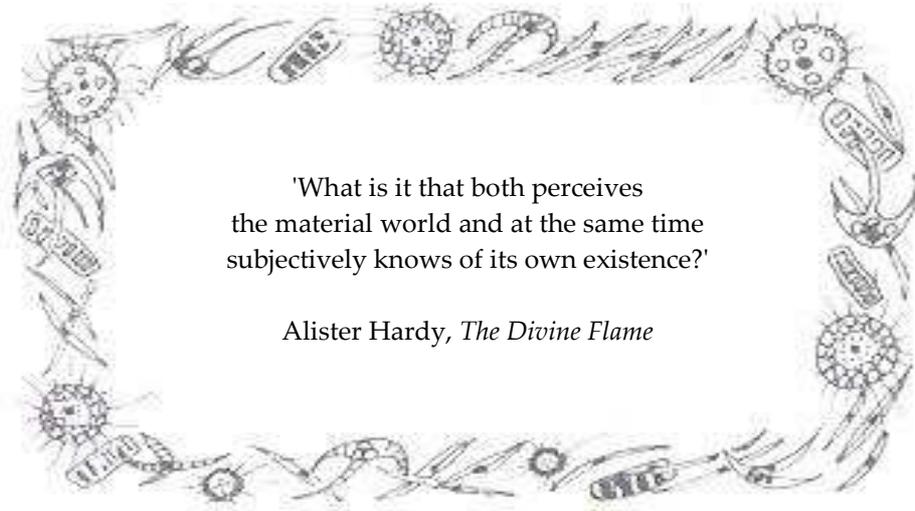
If he felt an idea was exciting, then, no matter how outlandish it seemed to others, he stuck to his guns. Maintaining a child-like curiosity about the world in which he lived was far more important to him than fussing over critics and reputations. He knew how crucial it was to distinguish between proper scientific caution and stuffy academic cowardice. It would have been cowardly to abandon such a promising new idea, but he did apply caution by patiently awaiting some direct fossil evidence to support his theory. That evidence has yet to arrive and so, sadly, the famous 'Aquatic Theory' was one book that Hardy never got around to writing.

He did, however, publish several volumes on the biology of religion, another of his controversial preoccupations, and was successful in setting up a special Research Unit in Oxford to pursue these studies. Although he took the subject very seriously and was a devout Christian, his bubbling sense of humour could not be suppressed, even when discussing God. He once exclaimed 'We must not forget that *dog* is *god* spelled backwards, and that *man* is to *dog* what *god* is to *man*. He firmly believed that there is some kind of afterlife and, if he is right, I am sure that it must be a much livelier, happier place now that he has arrived there.



(Oxford Times, 31 May 1985)

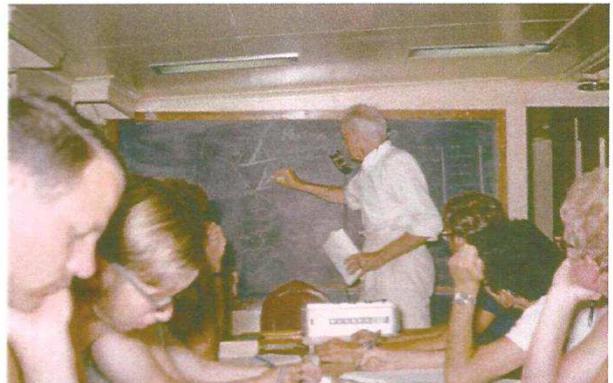
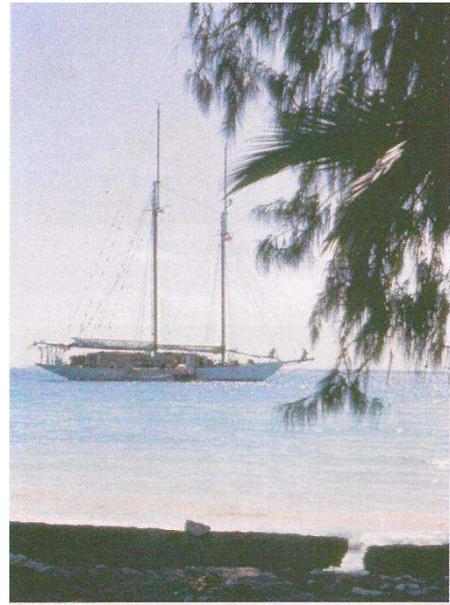
**50th Anniversary
of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research
Centre**



**Sir Alister Hardy: Reminiscences of the
Man and his Legacy**

from Family, Friends, Colleagues and AHT Members

The Voyage of the 'Te Vega', summer 1965



The Voyage of the 'Te Vega', in 1965, was recorded by Ben Korgan, pictured above on board with Sir Alister. Ben was a graduate student who accompanied Sir Alister on this epic voyage to study the eco-systems of islands in the Pacific Ocean. His account was serialised in *De Numine* from Spring 2005 to Spring 2009

Dr David Hay, Director RERC, 1985-1989

Trawling in Deep Water

You can smell the sea when you stand in the quadrangle of my old college in Aberdeen, and on the occasions when they used to clean out the fish-meal factory everybody knew it, not just in Marischal College but all over town. Sometimes the gulls kicked up such a racket that you could hardly hear yourself speak. In 1956 I was in my twenty-first year and studying zoology in a laboratory overlooking that ocean-perfumed quad. It crossed my mind that I would be a marine biologist.

The summer vacation drew near and I managed to land a job working on the *Explorer*, the research trawler belonging to the Scottish Fisheries Marine Research Laboratory in Torry, over on the other side of the harbour from the University. On one of those warm pale evenings you get in the North and with my seafaring gear weighing me down, I found my way to the trawler and hauled myself aboard. Two women were standing on the quay, beckoning to a grizzled man standing at the top of the companionway. 'Amateurs!' he sneered at them, and spat over the side. What sort of a place is this, I wondered?

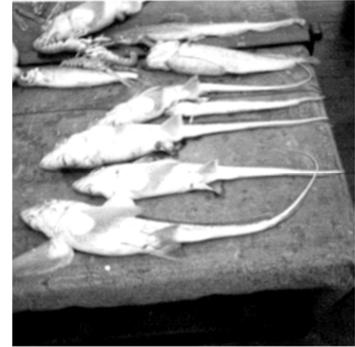
I felt some relief when I saw further along the main deck a tall, slenderly built and bespectacled gentleman in the regulation tweed suit of an old-fashioned university don. He was watching the incident with an amused smile. 'Excuse me, Sir' I said, 'I've just arrived and I'm not sure who to report to or where to go'. Alister Hardy was aboard ship to prepare the illustrations for a book he was writing on fish¹ in the New Naturalist Series. This was the first time I spoke to him, but since I was keen on fish and fisheries I knew who he was and his reputation as the most eminent marine zoologist of his day. He had been Professor of Natural History in Aberdeen before being given the Chair of Zoology in Oxford. Without realising it I had seen his handiwork when I was a small boy, wandering round the Zoology Museum he created in Marischal College. It would be no surprise when, a year after I first met him, he was knighted for his services to marine biology. To me as a raw undergraduate, he seemed formidable.



I was quite wrong to feel nervous, for Alister laughed easily and had a disarming boyish sparkle that cut through others' shyness. That was fortunate for me, because we were to be sitting for many days in the officers' mess, chatting round the table between bouts of hard work. Apart from the one-off task of tracking down unusual fish for Hardy, the *Explorer's* job was to plod along a predetermined grid plan of the North Sea, taking trawl samples at regular intervals. This was part of a programme for estimating commercial fish stocks, which even then were in worrying decline. In between times there was plenty of leisure and I began to find out something of the intensity of Hardy's commitment to an unexpected subject.

I can't remember for sure why I raised the topic. Anyway, one evening I started talking about *The Idea of the Holy*, a book I'd been reading by the German philosopher-theologian Rudolf Otto. I was probably trying to show off, for I felt I knew something about it. A year or so previously in a General Studies class in the Sixth Form at school I had been introduced to Otto's term 'numinous' referring to the presence of the sacred or holy. I was expounding my view on this idea and was taken aback when Alister responded with great enthusiasm. Soon we were regaling each other – though I suppose in the main Alister was regaling *me* – with his ideas about the evolution of religious experience. As I made my way to my cabin where the midnight sun was still streaming through the porthole I thought to myself, this is great stuff.

During the next few days we started looking for rare specimens suitable for Alister to make watercolour illustrations. Some of them came from the deep water off the coast of Norway, including the curious rat-tailed *Chimaera monstrosa* or Rabbit Fish (presumably because it has what look like buck-teeth on the front of its mouth). When he had painted a particularly fine specimen Hardy gave it to me and I in turn presented it to the museum in Aberdeen University, where as far as I know it still resides. One evening a message came over the ship's radio to say that a rare Opah or Moonfish had been brought ashore in the Shetland Islands. Alister was keen to examine it so we changed course, south for Lerwick. Indeed, the great purple and red fish was spectacular enough for me to take a photograph of it as it lay on the deck of the *Explorer*.



You can still see the paintings Hardy made of these fish if you look in his book *Fish and Fisheries*. I went home and told my parents about the excitements of the trip and then let them slip from my mind, though every now and then Hardy kept in touch. Nearly twenty years later, the half-forgotten conversation about Otto bore unexpected fruit. I started to work at the Religious Experience Research Unit in Manchester College Oxford.²

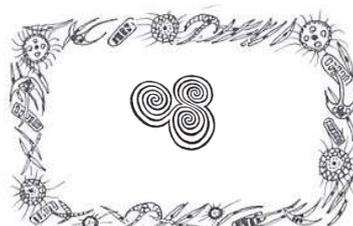
I never became a marine biologist, but in a way you might say that Hardy led me into exploring another kind of deep water. At the age of seventy, three years younger than Alister when he founded the Unit in 1969, I am still trawling in those remarkable depths.

David Hay

[an account of the voyage on the 'Explorer', 1956, reprinted from *De Numine*, Autumn 2005, pages 7-9]

¹ *The Open Sea: Fish and Fisheries*, New Naturalist Series, London: Collins, 1959

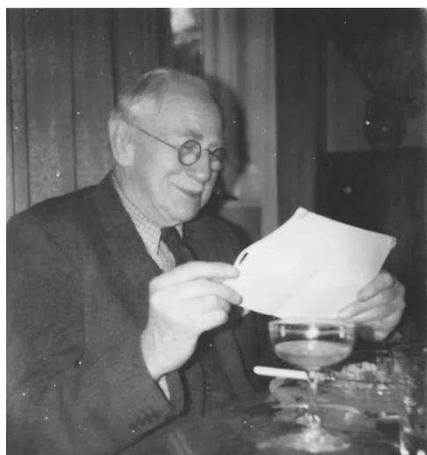
² Now Harris-Manchester College, Oxford



Belinda Farley

Some Memories of my Father, Alister Hardy

I am going to try and give you a glimpse of what my father was like at home – the more light hearted side of his character and his many interests. He had tremendous energy and love of life, with a great sense of humour and he enjoyed amusing stories, and telling them, which he was very good at – so he was good company and fun.



Once in his study though he was serious and not to be disturbed. He was very disciplined and thorough in everything he did, with great attention to detail. He often had several projects on the go at the same time. He never wasted any time so occasionally things could be very last minute. When a younger man he would sometimes catch trains as they were starting to move out of the station – it wouldn't be allowed now!

My father got very excited about the first signs of Spring – the aconites, snowdrops, daffodils and spring blossom. May and June were his favourite months. He would like walking along the Oxford canal and the Thames to see the wild flowers, cow-parsley and the May trees in flower, always hoping to see his first orange-tip butterfly of the year.

Since boyhood he was very interested in flight and made several scrapbooks of airships, balloons, kite flying and early aeroplanes. He loved to go to the Shuttleworth Collection at Old Warden in Bedfordshire. There he would see some of the early planes flying. He did some hydrogen ballooning as a young man and wrote about it in his book *Weekend with Willows*.

Celebrating family birthdays was important to him and that included his own of course – he enjoyed a lunch party. Christmas was very special to him and things could get rather hectic at times; my mother found it all a bit exhausting. He would draw two different cards – one for friends, family and colleagues – mostly views of Oxford. The other would be for his First World War Cyclist Battalion – usually cartoony and sometimes a bit sentimental. He had them printed and then added some colour if needed, such as the sprigs of holly. The berries always had a highlight on them by leaving a bit of white paper. One year my mother offered to help paint them but she forgot to leave the highlights so she wasn't allowed to do them again! They would sometimes receive about 400 cards back which my father would arrange in the sitting room and study. He enjoyed decorating the Christmas tree, and a visit to the Oxford pantomime was a must. As a boy his mother would take him to the Music Hall and he knew a lot of the old songs and remembered the words up to the end of his life.



Another enthusiasm was the annual St Giles Fair in Oxford which he would enjoy until his late 70's – he liked the big wheel and the Rotor, a rotating ride with a drop away floor. I remember going on the roller coaster at Great Yarmouth with him and he immediately wanted to have a second go!

As you probably know he was a very talented artist – he could draw superbly and his watercolours were wonderful. The Cotswolds were an inspiration to him and he found painting a relaxation and referred to it as his ‘bottle of medicine’. He would mostly paint his pictures outside and worked fairly quickly to capture the light. On holidays abroad to Italy, Spain, France, Corfu, Sicily and Crete, also worldwide tours, he would bring back paintings. His Antarctic paintings were very special and they illustrated his book *Great Waters*; he gave them to the Maritime Museum in Greenwich. On holiday in Norfolk he was painting some jellyfish for illustrations in his book *The Open Sea* (Volumes I and II) and couldn't finish them all in one day, so he put the jellyfish in the fridge for the night to preserve their colours. My mother wasn't too pleased!

My father was extremely fortunate to have married my mother – she had been a zoology student in Oxford at the same time and they met while dissecting a dogfish together. She supported him wonderfully every inch of the way. They were an amazing couple.

Belinda Farley



Tom Farley, Julia Latimer (grandson and granddaughter of Sir Alister), Belinda Farley (his daughter) and Jane Winship (his great-niece)

Professor Jeff Astley, Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience, University of Warwick

My memory of Sir Alister Hardy

I met Sir Alister only once and then ‘at a distance’. The occasion was probably sometime during the academic year 1969-1970, when he was travelling the country drumming up support for the appointment of staff and researchers at the newly-founded Religious Experience Research Unit (RERU) at Manchester College, Oxford. At the time, I was completing my studies in preparation for ordination at the (then purely Anglican) Queen’s College, Edgbaston, as well as doing some directed reading in the Philosophy of Religion under Professor John Hick in the nearby Department of Theology of Birmingham University. It may be that Hick told me about Sir Alister’s visit and the open meeting, I attended, and it is likely that Hick was present as well.

Sir Alister gave an informal presentation about the importance of studying the natural history of religious experience, and of broadening the conception of human experience and human nature beyond what the natural sciences alone could reveal. His background as an Emeritus Professor of Zoology and Fellow of the Royal Society gave him considerable authority in my eyes, and it was refreshing to find a biologist arguing for rather than against the possibility of a transcendent dimension. My recent experience as an undergraduate in Cambridge, where I had studied first the biological sciences and later Theology, had been that very few practising biologists would support such a view, and that even fewer theologians had much background understanding of Biology and the challenges that it posed to their own work.

Sir Alister would have been in his early 70s when I saw him, and clearly belonged to a much earlier generation (I was 22). He presented a rather daunting figure. But he spoke with vigour, passion and enthusiasm, and he certainly gave me something to think about. After the talk, he distributed copies of an abridged version of his Oxford lecture, 'Science and an Experimental Faith', reprinted from the 1968 issue of the journal *Faith and Freedom*, which I filed away and still possess.

This was, alas, the nearest I got to meeting the founding father of the empirical study of religious and spiritual experiences in this country, which led to the creation of the Alister Hardy Archive and its related literature. Whether Sir Alister received much funding for this work in the form of donations from the few of us gathered in Birmingham University on that day, I doubt. Certainly, as an impecunious ordinand on a Church of England grant, I was in no position to contribute to the £10,000 figure he mentioned.

Nevertheless, the seed he broadcast did not wholly fall on stony ground.

Jeff Astley

Professor Leslie J. Francis, Chair of Trustees, Alister Hardy Trust

Sir Alister Hardy and the Science of Religion: A personal reflection



Alister Hardy shines as a pioneer in the field of the science of religion. His interest in the subject emerged during the 1920s and really began to flourish in the 1960s after he retired from the Linacre Chair in Zoology at Oxford University.

Religion is a complex and multidimensional construct. Recognised dimensions embrace categories such as the following: religious affiliation, which describes the religious tradition to which individuals belong, including major and diverse traditions like Christianity as well as denominational streams within such traditions; religious belief, which describes the cognitive content of individuals' religious ideas, including big ideas like God and the diverse kinds of gods in whom people believe; religious practice which describes the behavioural components of religion, including public worship and the different ways in which this is conducted; religious experience which describes the diverse ways in which individuals experience transcendence and the different ways in which this is expressed. When dealing with such complex and multidimensional constructs, wise scientists need to be clear about the precise dimension on which to concentrate their scientific investigation. Alister Hardy focused his work on religious experience.

The science of religion can be expressed in a variety of ways and draws on a range of different and distinctive scientific methods. The 1960s in the UK was an exciting time for the scientific study of religion; the subject attracted academics from a variety of disciplines. In Oxford University Michael Argyle's 1958 book *Religious Behaviour* was becoming known and Argyle's lectures were beginning to attract attention. Argyle was rooted in social psychology. In Reading University Ronald Goldman's 1964 book *Religious Thinking in Childhood and Adolescence* was beginning to shake the world of religious educators. Goldman was rooted in Piaget's cognitive psychology. From the newly established Lancaster University, Ninian Smart's 1969 book *The Religious Experience of Mankind* was establishing a new environment within which the wider study of religion could be conceptualised. Smart was rooted in philosophical traditions. Into this vibrant environment Alister Hardy brought his distinctive scientific perspective for studying the phenomena of religious experience. Hardy was rooted in scientific methods shaped by zoology. From his roots in zoology, Alister Hardy used the word 'experience' in a much narrower and more tightly focused way than Ninian Smart. For Hardy, religious experience was concerned with the way in which individuals regarded themselves as being 'aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self'. As a zoologist Hardy's scientific aim was to collect as many examples as possible of the ways in which ordinary individuals described their religious experiences. Hardy's ambition was to analyse and to categorise the content of these experiences. The aim and the scale of this ambition were inspirational.

As an undergraduate in Oxford reading theology between 1967 and 1970, I became inspired by and caught up in this interest in the growing science of religion. I attended Argyle's lectures, I was influenced by a Jesuit psychologist of religion at Heythrop and Campion Hall, and I drafted a proposal to build on Goldman's foundations in Piaget's psychology; but then I escaped to Cambridge in order to prepare for ordination in the Church of England. While there I attracted funding to do my proposed doctorate in the psychology of religious thinking, and worked on it for two years before coming to the view that this was not going to be a fruitful field. My interest had transferred from cognition to affect, and from thinking to attitude. While I was making new connections between religious affect and religious experience, I recall influential conversations with Edward Robinson in Oxford and with David Hay in Nottingham, two key voices that helped to shape my own trajectory.

My interest in the Alister Hardy enterprise has remained strong from these early encounters in the 1960s and 1970s. It was a privilege to be invited in 2002 to stand as Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust, and I continue to serve in that position. As Chair of the Trust my ambition has been to see Alister Hardy's vision for the science of religious experience to flourish, for the Archive to increase in content, and for the academic investigation of that content to be explored with scientific rigour. Now in 2019, as well as celebrating fifty years of achievement for the Archive, the time is right to see how Alister Hardy's vision can be further influenced by the advances in knowledge that his initiative in 1969 has helped to shape.

Leslie Francis

Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke, Joint President of the World Congress of Faiths

Alister Hardy's pioneering work has had a large influence on my thinking. Soon after returning from a year's study in India, I joined the World Congress of Faiths (WCF), which was founded by Sir Francis Younghusband whose spiritual experiences in Tibet had convinced him of the Oneness of God, the Supreme Reality to which all religious paths point, but who transcends them all.

My year in India had led me to question the then current theological emphasis on the Secular Gospel, the Death of God and efforts, in the face of Linguistic Philosophy, to argue that it *was* possible to speak of God. Reading the devotional poems of Tamil saints and being introduced to the story and message of Sri Ramakrishna had made me uneasy with Christians claims to have a monopoly of truth.

One of the first WCF lectures that I attended was by Sir Alister Hardy, who had been a member for many years. I can still picture him clearly – with his glasses and moustache and tweed jacket. He gave an outline of his programme of research on religious experience, which he had just written about in the *Observer*. Hardy's lecture was important to me in several ways. It reinforced my view that theology should start with human spiritual experience rather than the Word of God; that all religions are channels of God's grace as well as a record of human responses to the Divine; that as trade, travel and modern communications were bringing people ever closer together, faith communities needed to replace competition by co-operation; that the aim should surely be working together for a more just and peaceful world in which all people can enjoy life in all its fullness, and in which the natural world is cherished.

Words written by Sir Alister some fifty years ago are still an inspiration and a challenge: 'Just as science is science in any country of the world, so in the future there may be a faith to bind all people together in a universal recognition that what they in their different ways have called God, Nirvana, Kwoth (an African name for the God of Creation) and other names, is in truth a demonstrable part of the very nature of man – man the religious animal.' He also said, 'As we feel in touch with a power and a glory beyond ourselves, we can make the world a different place – a new kingdom.' (*The Biology of God*, pp. 232-3)

Marcus Braybrooke



Marcus and Marianne at the WCF book launch, London 2009

Professor Dr Cafer Sadik Yaran, Director of Research in Turkey for the AHRERC Global Project



I came to the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales, Lampeter, in 1991, to do a PhD degree in the Philosophy of Religion. My supervisor was Professor Paul Badham. I encountered the topic of religious experience and probably the name of Sir Alister Hardy in his lectures. He placed great emphasis on religious experience and particularly near-death experience in his courses. At that time, there was a growing emphasis in theology and religious studies circles in Lampeter on the exploration of religious experience. This tradition, fostered by Professor Badham, had originated with John Hick and Alister Hardy.

After gaining my PHD at Lampeter, I returned to my country, but continued to attend international meetings concerning religious and mystical experience, particularly when the subject was approached from the perspective of Muslim religious and spiritual experience. In one of them, I was introduced to Dr David Hay and we decided to do a research project comparing religious experience of Muslims living in Turkey and Great Britain. Istanbul University supported the project financially and the results were published as a book in Turkish and an article in English.

In 2009 I was invited to give the Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture on the 40th Anniversary of the setting up of the RERC in Oxford. I still always encourage my postgraduate students to study religious experience, and works written by Sir Alister Hardy. Two of my PhD students have already completed their theses on religious experience. My students and I are keen to follow, and sometimes to contribute to, the developments in RERC through the *Journal for the Study of Religious Experience*, and also *De Numine*.

Cafer Sadik Yaran



RERC Global Project group photograph, 2007. Professor Yaran is third from left, back row.

RERC DIRECTORS

Peggy Morgan, Director, 1996-2003

Resurrecting the Centre

I have divided my reflections for this special edition of *De Numine* into three parts: Firstly, the roots of my interest in the whole topic of religious experience; secondly, the history of RERC at Westminster College and thirdly the wider arena of its outreach including the present and future in Lampeter.

I would not have been so drawn to the work of the Religious Experience Research Unit (as it was at first called) had I not already had a background which took



Peggy Morgan with Paul Badham

very seriously listening to the voices of those whom we call insiders, those whose traditions and experiences we are studying. That background also emphasised the importance of the experiential dimension in religious and spiritual traditions and worldviews. Thus my interest in the collection of archives and my engagement with the research of the unit/centre flowed naturally rather than being a dramatic discovery as it has been for many. It came from my involvement in the interdisciplinary and polymethodic field of the study of religions generally. And it is in this broad context that I maintain that the work of the Centre must continue if it is to be relevant and successful in both scholarly, which is what Sir Alister wanted, and personal ways. So my initial engagement, the work I did whilst Director, and my hopes for the Centre's future are rooted in the same soil.

The initial engagement emerged from the Lancaster Department of Religious Studies and in particular the ethos created there from 1967 by Ninian Smart, its founding professor, who was one of RERC's Trustees for a time. In an essay on 'Myth and Transcendence' (1966: *The Monist* 50(4) pp.475-487) he wrote 'there is a holy power working within and beyond the cosmos present secretly to us everywhere, and specially present and active in such-and-such events and experiences'. This reference to a 'power', echoed in the work of the anthropologists so much admired by Hardy, became part of RERU's discourse in Hardy's initial question.

Thus with Hardy's work what might previously have been a secret in people's lives became properly documented and respected by virtue of its study. Smart emphasised the use of 'sympathetic imagination', that 'the study of religions requires a sensitive and artistic heart' and that participant observation as practiced by anthropologists and some sociologists were important. Hardy was, as we know from his writings, very influenced by the anthropologists he met in Oxford, where it has a pioneering place.

One of Smart's most successful books, which went into five expanded editions, was *The Religious Experience of Mankind*. In this analysis of religion into six (later 7 and even up to 9) dimensions, experience has a central place and could even be seen as seminal in the origins of religions. Notable examples given are Gotama's experience under the Bodhi Tree at Bodh Gaya, Paul's experience on the road to Damascus and Muhammad's experience on Mount Hira. In the Lancaster syllabus there was a central place for the work of Schleiermacher, who emphasised a sense and taste for the infinite in the finite, and the feeling of absolute dependence, as at the heart of religion. Rudolf Otto who used

the term *Das Heilige* (translated into English as 'holy') in his seminal book *The Idea of The Holy* has quite a lot to say about the arts which both stimulate and express experience. William James with his many disciplinary talents in psychology and philosophy and sociology explored *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and uses many examples so that we can hear the insider's voices through the inclusion of the empirical work of Starbuck, his colleague at Harvard. All of the above are important as background to the flowering of RERU/C's thinking, for all our activities arise out of an existing intellectual bedrock and Hardy often gives us leads into this in his references and interdisciplinary interests. That is what drew me in and in the light of what I have mentioned above, it was no surprise that in the early days of RERU, Ninian Smart invited Alister Hardy to visit the pioneering new Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster and to give a lecture on his work. Hardy saw what he wanted to do as continuing these lines of exploration and in particular that of William James, but with reference to ordinary people, not just the religious virtuosi from whom James most often quotes.

When I moved to Oxford in 1976 I quickly sought out the Unit in its home at the then Manchester College. I did not know Alister Hardy personally, only as a distant, donnish and patriarchal figure but he feels nearby in his beautiful painting of a Swiss flower meadow which was a kind gift from the family after I retired from the Directorship of RERC and which hangs by my bedhead. I was also



With Wendy Dossett and Edward Robinson in the Archive Room at Lampeter

given a copy of his book on the Cotswolds when I retired from the Directorship and have added to it Andy Burns' book of recent matching photographs. (See Andy's contribution, page 49) Whenever I go by train up the Cotswold line I think of Hardy with his bicycle venturing forth. I was privileged to get to know Michael Hardy (also a biologist) before he died and still enjoy contact with Belinda Farley, his daughter's memory of what fun he was and how full of life. When I became Director I was much supported by Alister's close friend Alan Bullock the

historian. He told me that when Hardy was in hospital at what turned out to be the end of his life he was walking along Jowett Way and had the sense that his father was urging him to go to see Alister. When he did, Alister asked him to make sure that the work continued. At that time Bullock was writing a biography of his father called *Building Jerusalem*. His father was a working class autodidact and significant Unitarian minister and educator. The book was reviewed as 'a great historian's tribute'. Alan Bullock gave me a copy of the book when I became Director. It is a splendid link with the Unitarian tradition out of which the research emerged.

Once in Oxford I could see Edward Robinson (another person with multi-disciplinary interests) working in the room fronting Holywell Street, which is now a tuck shop. He was very generous and would come to spend time with my students at Westminster College, arguing with them and stimulating their reflections. When I wanted a logo for the Centre I asked him to design a spiral for us ... but he said he could not better the Newgrange ones that we have used ever since. He remained a good friend to the Centre till his death, visiting and bequeathing an important collection of art to Lampeter. Robinson was involved in education at all levels. He wrote a ground-breaking book around the accounts of childhood experiences remembered in adulthood called *The Original Vision*. David Hay with Rebecca Nye continued that aspect of the Centre's research with newly collected accounts, and analysis based on interviews in schools in *The Spirit of The Child*.

We are very fortunate to have the voices and memories of those now deceased in print: in particular in the writings of Alister Hardy himself, of Edward Robinson and David Hay. But of course in many ways the most important voices are not just those of the researchers but of the people whose experiences lead them to support the centre with their voluntary energies, such as of John Franklin who wrote the definitive history of RERC and AHS, and arranged and recorded so many meetings, and the late Oliver Knowles who funded the centre through some critical years. There are also many others who raise and donate funding for the research to continue.

After the Centre had moved to Westminster College there was a disastrous period up to 1996 when closure was almost inevitable because of financial challenges. Under Alan Bullock as chair of the then Council, I was asked by the Governors and the college whether I would be prepared to take on the Directorship as part of my college contract and to see what I could do to resurrect the Centre which otherwise would completely close. So I took a deep breath and said I would do it. I obtained Templeton funding for the archives to be digitalised and Diana Hastings worked tirelessly on that project. To raise funds and draw in a range of scholars, I organised various lectures and these were printed as occasional papers to sell. Half a suitcase of these went with me to sell at all events I attended. It is an impressive list drawing on a wide range of scholars and now accessible online.

Whilst Director and since, I have reached out to the wider community of scholars in various ways, making a list, for example of references to Hardy and his work in wider publications. One example of this is Kay Redfield Jamison's autobiography *An Unquiet Mind* in which she mentions meeting Alister Hardy while dining in Merton College when she was in Oxford on sabbatical and that he was one of the most interesting and open minded people she encountered. Professor John Rodwell says of Hardy that he was 'a scientist with imagination'. I met Caroline Franks Davis whose research is published as *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience*, and Lene Sjørup whose research on the archives led to the publication of *Oneness*.

Hardy is also mentioned in Elaine Morgan's autobiography *Knock 'em Cold, Kid*. In 1972 she wrote *The Descent of Woman* in response to Darwin's *Descent of Man*, and notes (pp. 104-5) that Desmond Morris refers to Sir Alister, and his question 'was man more aquatic in the past?'. She wrote to Hardy who replied kindly and encouragingly and later wrote a preface to her second book *The Aquatic Ape*. In *The Naked Darwinist* she documents the road she had travelled promoting Hardy's ideas and her theories became known as the Morgan/Hardy thesis.*

One of the positive sides of my directorship was that I could continue to include the interests of the Centre in both full time and distance learning courses that I was already teaching. Andy Burns stands out as doing work with me on the BTh. distance learning with Westminster College and mentioned to me recently his 'good memories'. He went on to do the MA with the University of Wales, Lampeter and still contributes greatly to the Centre's work. Whilst at Westminster College I was also privileged to have Dr Mark Fox as a colleague for a time (see page 33). He was attracted to the post because of the presence of the archives and has contributed excellently to the research. And it was my experience of delivering distance learning courses with the Open University that led to my writing the core units for the MA in Religious Experience.



Arriving at Peggy's party at Oriel College, Oxford

When Oxford Brookes took over Westminster College they indicated that they had no room for RERC's library and archives as it did not fit into their future plans and that they wanted me to develop some other degree work. By that time I had invested a great deal of energy into resurrecting RERC, so I decided to sever my contract and salary, took a leap into the dark, left that institution and moved the Centre's library and archives to Lampeter. Initially I spent a whole dusty summer away from my home sorting the library and archives in their new environment with considerable support from Anne Watkins and Dr Wendy Dossett. Later I drove researchers back and forth and much enjoyed meeting and spending time with people such as Allan Kellehear, author of *Experiences Near Death*. When I decided to retire from RERC I was very pleased that Wendy took over the MA and later became Director and that now Professor Bettina Schmidt heads things up in Lampeter with her efficient dynamism and international experience as an anthropologist. Bettina followed me as Honorary President of the British Association for The Study of Religions in 2018. She will hold the post for 3 years. This is very advantageous to the Centre's profile and standing and the making of new national and international contacts for the work.

Remembering is always partial and biased and certain people have come to mind as I have been writing this, but I apologise if other important figures have been left out.

Peggy Morgan

* Elaine Morgan (1920-2013), a controversial advocate of the Aquatic Ape Theory of human evolution, was frustrated with the 'man the hunter' theories of human evolution that dominated scholarly and popular thinking in the 1960s. She found inspiration in two pages of *The Naked Ape* (1967), where Desmond Morris described Sir Alister Hardy's Aquatic Ape Theory. Hardy speculated that perhaps our pre-human ancestors learned to walk upright and gained the capacity for speech in the relative safety of the water's edge rather than in the harsh heat of the African savanna. Morgan contacted Hardy to ask if he would mind her writing a book that elaborated his idea for a popular audience. When *Descent of Woman* came out in 1972 it was dubbed a lively 'women's lib prehistory' and it was claimed that, given her evidence, 'even the most militant male chauvinist will find it difficult to cling to all his prior convictions'.

(adapted from Elaine Morgan's obituary in *The Guardian*)

Elaine Morgan was recently featured in the *Western Mail* as one of the five most important women in Welsh history. She gave her last public lecture at the University of Wales, Lampeter in May 2007 under the auspices of the Alister Hardy Society.. (Ed.)



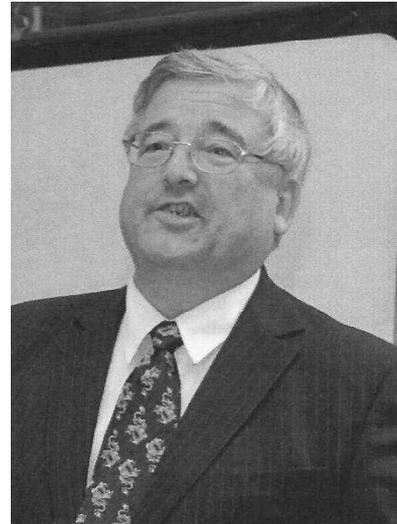
Elaine Morgan on Barry Island,
South Wales

Professor Paul Badham, Director 2002 to 2010

Sir Alister Hardy's work: an appreciation

I first became aware of Sir Alister's work through reading his Gifford lectures. These were published as *The Living Stream* and *The Divine flame* in 1965 and 1966. They were immediately recognised as making a major contribution to the science and religion debate. Both *The Observer* and *The Sunday Times* chose *The Living Stream* as their 'book of the year' for 1965. The Gifford lectures showed how valuable it would be to study religious experience with the same scientific thoroughness as we study other aspects of human life. This provided justification for Sir Alister's establishment of the Religious Experience Research Unit (now Centre) in 1969 and the publications which flowed from that; notably his *The Biology of God* in 1975 and *The Spiritual Nature of Man* in 1979.

The publication of the Gifford lectures came at an important stage in my own theological development. After completing a traditional degree in theology at Oxford in 1965, I had moved to Cambridge in 1966 to take a second degree in *Christian Theology in the Modern World*. A major focus of this course was the changing relationships between theology, philosophy and the natural sciences in the past two hundred years. Hence Sir Alister's integration of religious experience within an evolutionary understanding was fascinating and, for me, very timely.



In studying modern theology, I was struck by how much Sir Alister had taken up themes which had also been foundational for earlier generations of Christian theologians. Friedrich Schleiermacher, who used to be regarded as 'The Father of Modern Theology', taught that the dogmas and sacred writings of religions are all secondary to those religious feelings which give rise to them. Rather than studying religion at second hand, we should explore the nature of the immediate human consciousness of the infinite and eternal. It seems to me that that is precisely what the Religious Experience Research Centre is seeking to do,

The theologian most cited by Sir Alister was Rudolf Otto whose book *The Idea of the Holy* was a detailed exploration of the concept of the numinous and of those elements in human experience most likely to encourage it. Otto's work takes many examples from Biblical sources. This suggests that a religion based on revelation cannot be sharply contrasted with a religion based on experience, since the revelation itself is largely a record of human responses to the divine.

My own involvement with the Centre began in 1997 when I was invited to become a Trustee. Then, when Westminster College merged with Oxford Brookes in 2000 and the Centre was required to move, I negotiated a move to Lampeter and in 2002 became Director of the Centre. As Director I was keen to focus on Sir Alister's hypothesis that religious experiencing is a natural part of our evolutionary heritage.

Sir Alister believed that religious experiencing as a human response to transcendent reality will tend to be more comparable across different cultures than doctrinal systems and religious systems. This hypothesis seemed a sensible way of approaching the data gathered within Britain by the research undertaken at the Centre. But to properly test it we needed to see whether it was true from a global perspective.

We decided to begin with China because its religious traditions are very different from those found in western societies. On top of these historical differences, China has been an officially atheist society since 1949. We were able to carry out this research because Lampeter's then Professor of Chinese religion Xinzhong Yao had formerly been a philosophy Professor at the People's University in Beijing and retained good links with Chinese colleagues. With their support and with a major grant from the Templeton Foundation to cover expenses, the team interviewed over 3,000 people from 10 different sites across China, each of whom completed a twenty-four page questionnaire on their experiences and beliefs.

What we discovered gave strong support to Sir Alister's hypothesis: while cultural, political and philosophical issues strongly affect what people believe, they have less impact on what they experience. Thus after 60 years of official atheism, only 8.7 % of the Chinese described themselves as religious but 28.6% said they felt comforted or empowered by prayer and worship and 41% believed they should do their best to glorify God, the Lord of Heaven, the Buddha or their ancestors. Most surprisingly 56.7 % affirmed that they had felt themselves influenced by a power they could not control or explain clearly.

Our research in China stimulated parallel projects in Taiwan, India, and Turkey which similarly supported Sir Alister's hypothesis and how important his approach has been for the understanding of religious phenomena.

In short Sir Alister's work and thought have been important to me from the time I was a student at Cambridge until my retirement over forty years later.

Paul Badham

Dr Wendy Dossett, Co-Director 2002-2010

Narratives on their own terms: My encounter with Alister Hardy

I was first introduced to Alister Hardy's work as an undergraduate in the late 1980s. One of the key premises of his work immediately resonated – that religious experience (whatever that was) was not hard-wired to religion. Valuing the experiences and narratives of ordinary people seemed exciting to me in the context of the abstract doctrinal and textual focus of much of my studies. What seemed all the more radical was that people's experiences need not be categorised according to whether or not those that reported them were 'badged' with membership of a religious tradition. Such experiences might be meaningful outside of those contexts. Having devoured *Wuthering Heights* and the Romantic Poets as a sixteen-year-old I had developed an idealistic desire for 'authentic experience' which, I imagined, could have nothing to do with what I considered the rigidity and paternalism of the church. Hardy's work intrigued me, as did the work of Otto, Jung and James, because of the way they situated authority not in religious teachings, nor even in religious *virtuosi*, but in the ordinary individual. Over time, I've become less sure about the salience of concepts such as 'the individual', 'experience' and a religious/non-religious divide, but Alister Hardy definitely sparked for me an interest in the voices of ordinary people. Of course, what Hardy and others considered to be 'ordinary' was circumscribed by race, class, education and other forms of privilege, and scholars still have much to do to dismantle the structures which generate knowledge in this way. That said, the

so-called 'turn' in Religious Studies to 'lived religion', usually thought to be a late Twentieth Century development, has a largely unacknowledged debt to William James and Alister Hardy in the early and mid Twentieth Century respectively. Both placed value on narratives of personal religious experience.



Wendy Dossett with Peggy Morgan

I was privileged, when the opportunity arose ten years on from my first encounter with Hardy as an undergraduate, to assist Professor Paul Badham in the directorship of the Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC) The Centre had moved in 2000 from Oxford to Lampeter under the guidance of Peggy Morgan, who remained Director until 2002. In those days the archive was not digitised and had to be read *in situ*. Time spent getting to know it, either through my own reading or, with our administrator Anne Watkins, hosting researchers from all over the world, felt like time well spent. There have been more than 6,000 letters from the

general public in response to the Hardy Question, offering valuable insight into the language, culture, aspirations and anxieties of their respective times and social locations.

Around the RERC at that time there had grown a community which, to some extent, considered itself the inheritor of various Victorian traditions of Theosophy, Esotericism, Perennialism, and Psychical Research. The 'search' for a Common Core to religious experience, which had been central to many in the field at that time, seemed to chime with the universalist orientations of those movements. The experiences in the archive that garnered most interest from those proposing a Common Core almost always seemed to align with values shaped in a Christian/post Christian environment; in particular experiences of love, light, and intimations of life after death. To me, these 'experiences' were interesting not because they offered cumulative 'proof' that the universe was structured in a loving way, and death would somehow be survived (not that I was ontologically certain either way), but because of the culturally embedded values, convictions and yearnings expressed by the language used to articulate them. Far from undermining the study of religious experience, the argument that language and culture are prior to experience (Katz, 1978) made sense of it for me. I was concerned that the realist search for 'a common core' undervalued culture, context and indigenous voices. Whether experiences are classified as ordinary or extraordinary is fundamentally culturally relative, and the common core approach took a model formed in one culture, and, like the 'World Religions Paradigm', applied it elsewhere. The accounts, for me, are precious, culturally specific 'sociological data'; a reductive sounding phrase which perhaps fails to communicate the worth of the attempt to understand fellow humans, their cultures, values and forms of life. Current Director Bettina Schmidt's (2016) proposal to move away from universal categories to focus on *deixis*, the culturally contextual, opens up rich avenues of inquiry.

I cherish memories of sitting in Sir Alister's library with Peggy as she pulled out particular volumes, and laid out for me the debates and controversies in the study of religious experience, always with a gentle biographical commentary to ground the intellectual debates in human stories and vulnerabilities. In those conversations, my attention was drawn away from the dramatic: life-

changing visions, rips in the time-space continuum, and overwhelming unitive experiences (interesting though those were), to the quotidian: friendship, childbirth, grief, watching milk turn into butter in a hand churn.

My work these days with experiences reported by people in recovery from addiction (www.csarsg.org.uk) owes a great deal both to Hardy's presentation of individuals as legitimate interpreters of their own experiences outside the structures of organised religion, and to Peggy's encouragement to look beyond the apparently supernatural and extraordinary. I observe with interest that a group of scholars, including Sara MacKian, Natalie Tobert, Gregory Shushan and Jack Hunter, are finding new ways to rehabilitate durable theoretical models of religious experience. Part of their work involves challenging (in different ways) the cultivated scepticism they consider uncritically replicated in mainstream Religious Studies, and which they point out can be its own form of colonialism. They may be keener than I to maintain a distinction between social and 'actual' realities, but their warnings about arrogance are not easily countered. They remind me of the imperative, central to Hardy's own project, not only to value the narratives on their own terms, but to work with research participants as genuine co-producers of knowledge.

Wendy Dossett

Wendy with AHT patron His Eminence the Supreme Primate Koken Monryo Otani and 'Jo-San' his colleague on a visit to the UK in 2015. They are viewing Chester cathedral from the city walls



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Professor Bettina E. Schmidt, Current Director RERC

My introduction to Alister Hardy's work, how it has shaped my research and my role as Director of the RERC

My background is in cultural anthropology. Whilst I was interested in learning how religious beliefs and practices shape societies and cultures from the beginning, my research focussed on the performative aspects of religions, things we can see and observe. Even in my PhD thesis, that looked at two traditions in which people experienced what we usually call spirit possession, I analysed them with regard to identity, gender or migration. Typically for an anthropologist, I ignored what we cannot see. My Alma Mater is the University of Marburg, and was the home of Rudolf Otto, so I was not unfamiliar with the theme of religious experience, but I was aware that even scholars in religious studies treated Otto and his approach to religious emotion and experience with suspicion. But all of this changed when I came to Oxford to teach the study of religions in 2004.

In Oxford, Peggy Morgan took me under her wing and became my (unofficial) mentor. She showed me how things work at Oxford, even advising on the best place to live and to shop. She introduced me to people and she also introduced me to the academic field of religious experience. For the first time I heard about the Religious Experience Research Centre whose Director she has been, and about the work of Sir Alister Hardy in this field. (I had heard the name before only with regard to marine science as my sister is a marine geologist). The study of religious experience



Bettina with Peggy Morgan in Oxford

opened a new area of interest for me and I decided to focus my new research on what goes on in the minds of people when they say they incorporate a spirit or deity.

My life took another turn when I began working at the UWTSO in Lampeter in 2010. Before I arrived in Lampeter, the two directors of the RERC left; Paul Badham retired and Wendy Dossett moved to Chester University. I was asked to take over from Wendy the coordination of the MA in Religious Experience which Peggy Morgan had originally begun. This brought me close to the RERC. My focus was on teaching religious experience at that time, until in 2012 I was asked to become the director of RERC (after Greg Barker, who had replaced Paul as Director, left the university). My first action was to get the office organised. Working closely with Jean Matthews we made the Occasional Papers available online and Wendy Xerri, then head of the library, managed to get funds from the University to develop an online database for the accounts in the archive. These two initiatives gave the RERC a big push into the 21st century. For the first time researchers from all over the world were able to see our resources and use them for their research without coming to Lampeter. We now get applications from the USA, Canada, Japan, Taiwan and many other countries, and a good number of postgraduate students use the archive database.

The MA Religious Experience module has been merged with the MA Study of Religions, which has made the module on religious experience more attractive to a wider range of students, in particular as

it is also offered on other MA programmes within the faculty as one of the optional modules. In 2013 we also validated a new MRes (Master by Research) in Religious Experience which has become increasingly successful in recruitment. I have also set up an online Journal that replaced the Occasional Papers (the last one was published when Paul was still the director) and I decided to launch the revival of the Centre with a one day conference in 2014. Papers from this conference were published (with a few additional articles) in the new journal under the title *The Study of Religious Experience*. In the introduction I began by pointing to the significance of Sir Alister Hardy for our field. The one day conferences have continued and I was also able to set up – in co-operation with Jeff Leonardi who became an honorary research fellow – a series of research seminars. A selection of papers given at the conferences and the seminars will be published in the second edited volume of the online journal that will come out this year

Overall, my journey, inspired by the work of Sir Alister Hardy, has been fascinating and led me deeper into the study of spiritual experience. Sir Alister was interested in anthropology, and I hope he would have welcomed my introduction of the anthropology of religious experience to the work of the RERC. I will continue the journey with new research that looks at the boundary between science and faith with regard to healing.

Bettina Schmidt



ARCHIVE RESEARCHERS

Dr Verena Tschudin



Verena, departing Editor of *De Numine*, with Marianne Rankin

It was a sunny Sunday morning in the late 1970s when I heard on Radio 4 that someone was collecting accounts of ‘religious experiences’. Interesting, I thought, and sent in one or two accounts, unsure if that was what was wanted. It led to me joining, some time later, the London Group of the Alister Hardy Society and regularly attending meetings. These were always interesting and diverse, with good discussions.

At one of these meetings John Franklin asked for volunteers to edit a book on the accounts in the archive at Oxford. I had some experience in writing and editing books and had enough of an interest to volunteer. Thus began regular trips to Oxford to read the archives. My colleague and co-editor there, Meg Maxwell, was extremely kind and always helpful and far more knowledgeable about the archived material than I was. We had simply divided the archive between us, each reading half of the accounts. We felt increasingly disheartened because none

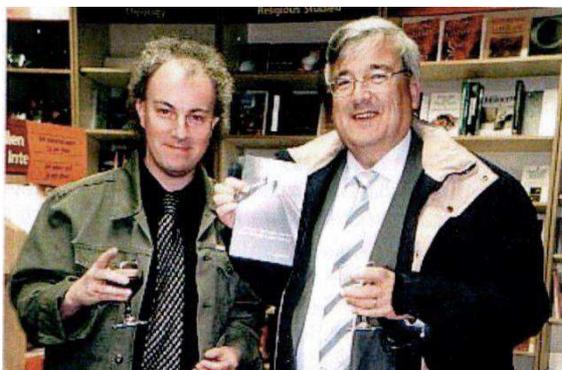
of the ways to classify the material that we had been asked to use seemed to work, until Meg hit on the idea of dividing them simply into single accounts or multiple accounts. Finally we got somewhere.

The book was published in 1990, thanks to a very helpful publisher, Robin Waterfield, who was keen to use the book in the newly established Arkana imprint of Penguin Books. The book seemed to sell like hot cakes and was reprinted many times. Eventually Arkana returned the copyright to the RERC and the in-house reprinting continued, with the RERC cover.

In 1993 Laurie Brown became the director of the RERC, making some significant changes to the running of the organization, including the newsletter, then named *Numinis*. I was persuaded to take it on under the new name *De Numine* and it was published twice yearly. Meanwhile, my professional workload increased and I was often away. David Greenwood had become Administrator at the AHRC, and the work and emphasis of the organization moved several times, eventually settling in Wales, when I needed to withdraw from the editing work. Interestingly and pleasingly for me, *De Numine* has built upon the compilation that I had set up, but now has a much increased content, with illustrations. Long may it continue!

Verena Tschudin

Dr Mark Fox



Mark Fox with Paul Badham at the launch of Mark's book, *Religion, Spirituality and the Near-Death Experience* in the University book shop, Lampeter 2002

I first discovered the RERC archive as a postgraduate research student exploring Near-Death Experiences and Conversion. My supervisor introduced me to *De Numine* and it was a short step from there to discovering Sir Alister Hardy's writings together with the Unit that he established. Since then I have made extensive use of the archive in my own research and writing: on Near-Death Experiences, unusual experiences of light, and overwhelming episodes of transcendent love.

To me, the archive might be compared to a massive and still largely unknown continent. We have explored a small part but much remains to be discovered and mapped. Sir Alister had a particular kind of transcendent episode in mind when he sent out his original appeals for accounts, but he received many kinds of experiences that he was *not* looking for. It is massively to his credit that he acknowledged and catalogued every account of every experience that he received and that he left so much for other researchers to examine. I have been the beneficiary of his foresight and remain forever indebted both to the work that he accomplished *and* to the collection of accounts which he left for others to explore.

As with any unmapped and still largely hidden continent there is so much about the archive and the realm of experience it represents that we still do not know. Basic things, such as its size for instance. How many individual experiences does it actually contain? Most estimates put the figure at around 6,500 but examination of what Sir Alister received as a result of his various appeals for experiences reveals that many respondents included *several* different descriptions of different episodes in any single letter to him. The actual figure may be much higher (nearer 10,000) than the current estimates suggest. The simple fact is that we do not yet know the size of what is before us. Perhaps one day we *will* know, although like any living thing our largely unexplored continent continues to expand as more accounts are added. There is much work still to be done. Like many pioneers Sir Alister led the way but there are very many areas of this continent which await the arrival of others.

Part of the ongoing challenge of navigating and investigating this massive territory lies in its uniqueness. How, exactly, do we explore such a place given that there are no other comparable explorations to help us? The result of this particular challenge has been the ongoing need for the development of new methodologies, particularly as regards the location and retrieval of the 'types' of experiences germane to any particular project. This, in turn, has served to locate ongoing work done within the archive at the 'cutting edge' of contemporary research into religious, spiritual and anomalous experience; thereby ensuring that Sir Alister's legacy is being carried forward in the spirit with which it was begun.

Another challenge lies in this continent's 'otherness'. I am thinking here in particular of what any researcher may expect to find once his or her exploration is underway. Very many archival accounts elude easy categorisation or definition: something that became very apparent to me when I was examining accounts of transcendent love. According to many respondents, these experiences are quite simply *ineffable: felt*, not understood, and not amenable to adequate or accurate definition. To complicate matters still further, many of the most unusual experiences in the archive appear to 'overlap' existing categories. An unusual experience of light, for example, may also usefully be seen at the same time as a 'type' of religious vision and/or a poltergeist manifestation. How might a researcher understand the 'otherness' of such an event, let alone try to classify or to categorise it? Is he or she presented with the need to develop new categories or 'types' in such instances or is the entire utility of categorisation and classification called radically into question at such times? It is one thing to classify a genus or species in the natural world. Quite another to classify a 'specimen' from the supernatural world. Perhaps a whole new approach is called for. Much of Sir Alister's pioneering work was in this whole area of classification and it is exciting to see what he started being carried on by others: not least as regards the 'fruits' of such experiences.

Of course, no continent is entirely 'other', and the strange land that Sir Alister did so much to open up is both unfamiliar *and* familiar. As already alluded to above, Hardy knew what he was looking for when he made his very first appeals for accounts, and he recognised the type of experience he was seeking when he saw it: one in which the subject has an ongoing – even continual – sense of a presence or power, whether called God or not. He himself was no stranger to such experience, writing toward the very end of his life that:

Just occasionally when I was sure no-one could see me, I became so overcome with the glory of the natural scene that for a moment or two I fell on my knees in prayer – not prayer asking for anything, but thanking God, who felt very real to me, for the glories of his kingdom and for allowing me to feel them.¹

In the event, as we know, he got very much more than he bargained for. More, in a sense, than he *needed*. To borrow an image that has already been used of him: he might be compared to a fisherman casting his net upon the water and finding not a few well-defined fish but an unexpectedly great array.² Yet this great array is unmistakably familiar once the net is drawn in, and students of the very many varieties of religious experience will have no difficulty in identifying the kinds of reports he received: visions, feelings of unity, out-of-body and near-death experiences, voices, a sense of being guided, comforting presences, and so on. In a sense, this mixture of familiarity and unfamiliarity characterises the strange continent that Sir Alister's pioneering spirit did so much to unearth. It is to be hoped that the next fifty years will allow us to see it all even more clearly.

Mark Fox

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¹ David Hay, *Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts* (London, Mowbray, 1990) p. 17

² Meg Maxwell and Verena Tschudin, *Seeing the Invisible: Modern Religious and Other Transcendent Experiences* (London, Penguin, 1990) p. 6

Dr Natalie Tobert

Sir Alister Hardy's Archive and New Thinking

Research Project with the Archive

At the start of the new millennium, committee members of the Religious Experience Research Centre funded my project on mystical, spiritual and religious experiences, where I explored the relationship between spiritual experience and mental health. I had undertaken data collection as part of an MSc dissertation in Medical Anthropology at Brunel University (2000) and a report was also later published as a RERC Occasional Paper (Tobert 2007). This research project analysing data collected by Sir Alister Hardy was instrumental in providing evidence towards innovative thinking in the field of psychiatry and mental well-being.

One of my aims was to examine testimonies in the Archive where respondents claimed to have negative experiences (whether by chance, deliberate action, or through stress or trauma). The results of my research evidence from data in the archive led to my lifelong exploration of the proposition that a continuum existed between spiritual experiences and psychosis.

Assumptions Explored

During my research project, I wanted to explore claims that spiritual or anomalous states were pathological, and the popular misconception that spiritual or religious experiences were synonymous with mental illness. The archive and database provided an invaluable resource, and the research was backed by other projects which offered additional evidence: one supported by the Kings Fund (Tobert 2010a) and another by NHS Harrow on mental health promotion with new migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Tobert 2010b).

What About Negative Experiences?

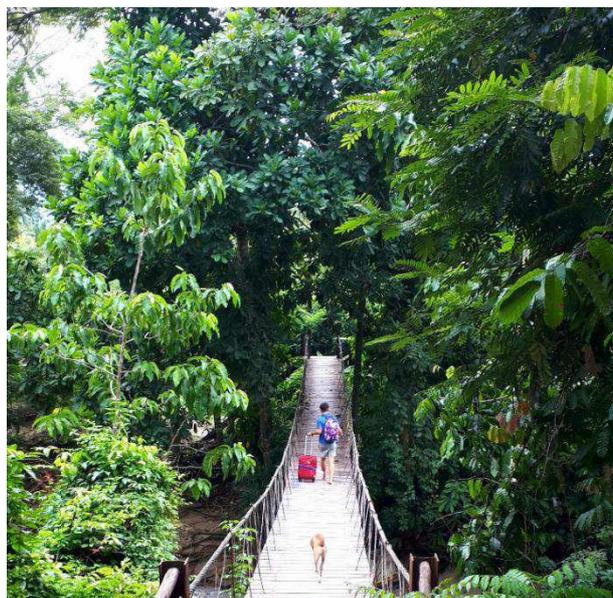
Evidence about perceptions of negative and positive experiences also came from my observational fieldwork in India, where interviewees included psychiatrists, priests, traditional healers, and patients (Tobert 2014): one psychiatrist recognised a continuum between positive and negative experiences. In UK psychologist Isabel Clarke (2010) also claimed paranormal and religious experiences, spiritual awakening and the 'symptoms' of psychosis lay on a continuum. Jakobsen (1999) observed that in western society people did not talk about negative experiences for fear of being labelled mentally ill, and Alister Hardy had at first classified so called 'negative experiences' separately and considered that they lay within the field of psychology

Religious Experiences: Why Does Cultural Diversity Matter?

In Europe, Australia and USA, for decades the dominant model for 'religious or spiritual experiences with distress' was considered to be biomedical, and we mistakenly assumed our interpretations and treatments of mental illness and psychosis were transferable throughout the world, to all populations. But this mind set has recently been challenged (see Fernando 2014, Watters 2010, Mills 2014). At the same time modern health practitioners were becoming more aware their bio-medical training did not fit the current *zeitgeist*, and indigenous populations around the world were taking issue with post-colonial attitudes. Evidence from the original indigenous inhabitants of Australia, Canada and USA show how they did not want their narratives about spiritual experiences and altered states of consciousness pathologised by a colonial host population using (to them inappropriate) biomedical models: they preferred their ancient practices to be acknowledged and honoured (Tobert 2017, T&R 2015).

Global Awareness

Across the western world both practitioners and experiencers were re-evaluating the nature of human consciousness and subtle energy. Research evidence from India, experiencers in UK, colonised peoples, and new migrants and refugees, supported the proposition that there was a continuum between spiritual experience and psychosis. The evidence from the Alister Hardy archive suggested that a paradigm change was needed around experiences, in order to acknowledge different cultural interpretations. Many people started to question old fashioned paradigms around mental health, not only from a 'cultural' perspective, but also from a new paradigm of understanding around consciousness (Walach 2018).



Natalie on a field trip in Columbia

Call for Collaboration and Scholarly Debate

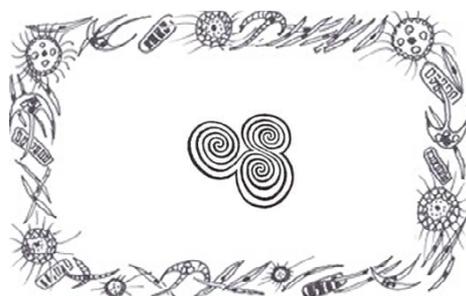
Evidence from the testimonies in the Alister Hardy Archive (Tobert 2000), suggests some people spontaneously accessed spiritual/ anomalous experiences, while others had experiences triggered by trauma. Those who had one-off spontaneous experiences, may have received a psychiatric label if people around them were not familiar with spiritual frameworks of understanding, or if the experient themselves became distressed or anxious. The results of my research into this evidence from the Archive led me to a particular line of academic enquiry, comparing the phenomenology of spiritual and anomalous experiences with psychosis. I am deeply grateful to Sir Alister Hardy for having had

the insight to collect peoples' narratives about their experiences. Today it would make a profound difference to social well being if scholars in different disciplines now collaborated to raise awareness of similarities around human experiences (Tobert 2015). I hope today's academics are inspired to discuss their understandings of the phenomenology of human experience.

Natalie Tobert

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Marianne Rankin, AHT Director of Communications, Chair AHS 2002–2008

I vividly remember the first time I heard about Alister Hardy. It was in the early 1980s and I was living in Singapore. Included in my mail from the Society for Psychical Research, of which I had been a member for over a decade, was a flier from the Alister Hardy Society. I was intrigued. Who was Alister Hardy and what were religious experiences? Were these people mad – or had they perhaps found an answer to one of the most important questions in life – whether or not there was a God?



In order to explore further, I joined as a mailing list member. On my return to UK in 1993, I attended meetings of the Oxford Group and wrote to the then Director, Laurence Brown, hoping to do some research. But what could a teacher/translator/interpreter/free-lance writer know about religious experience? Very little indeed. However, my appetite had been whetted and I began to read about the many religions with which I had been familiar during my years living in Malaysia, Brazil, the Philippines and Singapore. Were all those religious traditions right or all wrong, or did the truth lie somewhere in between? Were these religious experiences genuine? What kind of people had what sort of experience and of what? Were the religions themselves perhaps various responses to one divine reality? Might religious experience somehow bring religious traditions together?

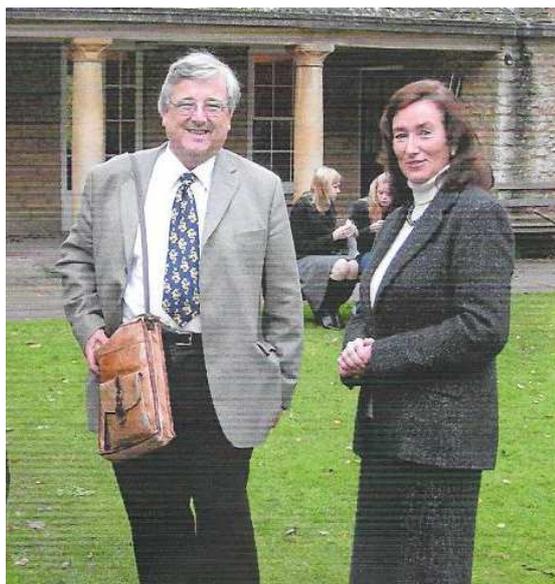
After a religious (Christian) upbringing, I had ditched it all, feeling myself to be an existentialist, along with Sartre and de Beauvoir. But the questions would not go away. I had studied philosophy, but I found the English logical positivism of the time a frustrating blind alley. I wanted to explore life, death and the meaning of it all. The Alister Hardy folk and the interfaith groups I attended seemed to be doing that.

When the AHS Oxford Group was threatened with closure, I volunteered to take it on – temporarily, I thought. In fact, it was ten years before I was able to hand it over. I became Chair of the group and very gradually began to accept that I needed to stand up in front of people, introduce speakers and eventually even give talks myself. Over the years, the group grew and we enjoyed some wonderful lectures and discussions. By then I had decided that these people were definitely not mad and that there was much to learn about the world's religions and religious experience. Eventually I decided that it was time to resign the chairmanship, and when I arrived at possibly the final meeting, I had no clear idea of the outcome as once again the group faced closure. But Rhonda Riachi stepped forward and the group continued to thrive, as it does today, once again led by Rhonda.

In 1998 I embarked upon a Master of Studies degree in The Study of Religion at Oxford University, to gain a deeper understanding of what religion is all about. After that, I wrote an Occasional Paper for the RERC entitled *An Introduction to Religious Experience*, to answer the question so often asked by people making contact with the organisation – what is religious experience? My research for that paper supplied me with the structure and material for the book I then decided to write. I chose my title *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience*, to retain 'religious' as it was used in schools and universities and 'spiritual' for everyone else, especially those put off by the word 'religion'. It took me nine months to write, just like a pregnancy. I had expected to make frequent trips to Lampeter, as access to the archive involved typing out people's accounts of their experiences one by

one. However, when people asked me what I was writing about and I reluctantly and very hesitantly explained, I was amazed at the reaction. Just as Sir Alister had found, people couldn't wait to share their experiences. Material for the book flowed my way and one person begged me to write her story, as she feared not getting around to it due to her disability. The book seemed to write itself. My aim was to cover as many aspects of religious and spiritual experience (RSE) as I could – including types and triggers, mystics, the founders of religious traditions, NDEs, and experiences of people like Aung San Suu Kyi, Cat Stevens and Eric Clapton. I had arranged for it to be published by Continuum and thoroughly enjoyed writing it. Since then it has opened doors for me to speak to VI Forms and to spiritually based groups, telling them about the AHT.

Rather in the way that I found myself Chair of the Oxford Group, I similarly became Chair of the AHS. The position had been offered and I had refused so often that when I arrived at the meeting at which John Osborn was to step down, I had still not decided what to do if once again offered the post. When someone said that Marianne should take over, but she won't – I found myself saying, 'well, she might'. That was in 2002. I took on the job on the understanding that Tristram Jenkins would be my Vice-Chair. I needed someone who understood about meetings as I had never attended any of our AGMs, preferring to wander around Oxford instead. Now I was faced with the mysteries of agendas and minutes and was petrified of chairing the annual event. Tristram spared me that ordeal until I had become familiar with the procedure and I served two terms.



With Paul Badham at Open Day, Oxford, 2004

Meanwhile I had also become a Trustee. When the Trust discussed looking for a publicity officer, someone who could get the message about our organisation and research out to others, I realised that I was already doing that – but unless I explained what I did, the search would continue. This resulted in my being appointed Director of Communications, a position I still hold. I try to get our work known beyond the AHT and with Andy Burns, from the Members and Activities Group, arranging our events and compiling our publicity material.

Now I am studying for a PhD exploring *The Fruits of Experience in the RERC Archive*. So my life has never been quite the same since I read that flier about the Alister Hardy Society all those years ago.

Marianne Rankin

Revd Jonathan Robinson, Chair AHS 2008-12

What triggered my interest in Alister Hardy's work and research into spiritual/religious experience

An interest in religious/spiritual experience, and its implications for gaining a better understanding about who we are, has been for me a more interesting and significant line of enquiry than unproven theological hypotheses. Becoming a member of the Society many years ago was a stepping stone to signing up for the Master's degree in the study of religions through the pathway of religious experience. I was one of the first on this course, initially at Westminster College in Oxford under the directorship of Peggy Morgan, and then at Lampeter with Professor Paul Badham. Besides an interest in what is broadly described as 'New Age Religions' it gave me the opportunity to study the ongoing research in the field of near-death experiences; also to explore Indian understandings of 'the Self', with Prof Gavin Flood, who was always stimulating.

The contemporary study of near-death experiences, as exemplified by Sir Alister's initiative and the ongoing use of the RERC archive as an international resource, seem to me to be a marker of the transition from an inherited religious and scriptural traditions: belief in a life beyond this world, to a more pragmatic and scientific approach, which is at the same time true to people's personal experience. This is probably more convincing for the majority of us today. Studying and reflecting on who we are has led me to the realisation that in reality there is no such thing as an objective 'self'. The insights of *advaita* and non-dualism surely leads to the conclusion that nothing is truly separate, that



With Paul Badham, Open Day 2010

all is interconnected. This chimes well with our modern and urgent concerns about ecology, our place in the environment and the universe. The concept of unity is not new, it is implicit in all the great religions and faith traditions, for example 'Dwell in me and I in you' (St. John's gospel ch.15 v.4) and in Hinduism 'Thou art that': the Atman or individual self which is ultimately one with the whole.

Under the auspices of the RERC I had the much valued opportunity to carry out a pilot study into people's religious and spiritual experiences in the state of Tamilnadu in South India. I was assisted in the field work by the Revd Peter Ravikumar, a Lutheran minister, the team of people he enlisted and also a grant from the Alister Hardy Trust. We interviewed a cross section of people from town, slum and rural areas. The results are with the AHT archive department at Lampeter, together with the personal spiritual experiences which we were able to record.

I believe that one of the most important contributions of the Alister Hardy legacy has been to provide a platform for us, individually and collectively, to pursue and share our spiritual journeys with each other through the archive, and to encounter the many other people who are bold enough to explore their own profound experiences and the insights which follow from this. This has provided

encouragement for us to be honest and true to ourselves, a welcome and much needed opportunity amongst all the pressures and confusions which beset us. This I believe is part of a larger movement, a transition of consciousness which is taking place around the world today. It is something which can give us hope for the future.

Jonathan Robinson



John Franklin, Hon secretary 1986-2015, London group organiser until 2016

What the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre has meant to me – some personal reflections.

I first heard about Sir Alister Hardy in October 1984, when I chanced on a two-page article by Mick Brown in *The Sunday Telegraph* about the work of the then Religious Experience Research Unit at Manchester College, Oxford. I was fascinated to find out, for the first time, that other people had similar spiritual experiences to those that I had had, and to learn that there was an academic institution actually researching into this subject. I was 48 at the time, an architect/town planner working for the London Borough of Greenwich. I had had a number of spiritual experiences, particularly, a mystical experience as a child, followed soon after by a psychic experience of some outside force that for a short while at various moments dominated my will and physical movements, forcing me towards what proved a particularly beneficial meeting, and lasting personal relationship. Coming so close together, these events deeply affected me: I was quite unable to understand or ground them at the time – and felt I couldn't tell anybody about them lest they thought me mad, or making it up. They left me wondering what to make of them. However, not knowing what to do, and with no further direction, I just had to put them to one side and go on with the matters of the moment; school, exams, college, career, marriage, work, mortgage, home life, etc. Every now and then I had other spiritual experiences and, from certain incidences in my life, got the impression that I was being 'guided' – by some agency that could see round corners where I couldn't. Sometimes this took the form of my not getting what I wanted, but finding myself on some other course, which not only turned out for the best but, looking back on my life, showed a clear pattern and direction; as if they were 'meant'.

After reading the article by Mick Brown, I contacted Edward Robinson, then Director of the RERU, giving an account of my spiritual experiences – and asking a lot of questions. This eventually led to my going to Oxford to meet and talk with Edward; and turned out to be a turning point in my life. I just felt then everything falling into place; and that the work going on at the Unit was of particular importance – more so to me than the town planning work on which I was then engaged in Greenwich. I acquired and read all available literature at the Unit including *The Divine Flame*¹, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*², *The Original Vision*³ and *This Time-bound Ladder*⁴: then later when I became eligible to take early retirement, events transpired to enable me to join the RERC as a volunteer helper.

Since then I have greatly benefited from learning about spiritual/religious experiences in their many forms. Working through a reading list given me by David Hay (then Director of RERC), I was also privileged to read accounts of spiritual experiences in the RERC archive; at this time; I also started reading literature about other religions, and the mystics of various faiths. I was pleased that my mystical experience as a boy had not locked me into Christianity, but enabled me as well to relate to the spirituality of other paths. The 32 years that I have been involved with the AHRERC has developed and deepened my thoughts and, in particular, my personal faith. Whilst still remaining a member of the Church of England, I am not happy with exoteric Christianity and Church dogma, but recognise and subscribe to the universalism of *esoteric* Christianity (or Jesuanity?), my personal approach being basically non-sectarian, unitarian and universalist.

I very much identified with the thoughts of Sir Alister in his belief in an inbuilt spirituality of humankind; and where he said in his analysis of the first 4,000 accounts collected by the RERU that it was vital to establish whether the characteristics of spiritual/religious experience 'are, indeed, applicable to mankind as a whole.'⁵ His vision of 'a new kind of natural theology that would grow out of the scientific investigation of the spiritual experiences of the human species'⁶ appealed to me. In a lecture given in 1951, he stated his feeling that 'it is likely to be more important for religion in the future to have a theology that is founded on the reality of religious experience than to have one that builds on supposed events in the past.'⁷ In his response to his Templeton Prize award, *The Significance of Religious Experience*⁸, he drew attention to the 'fundamental similarity' of the different faiths despite warring clashes between their followers, and quoted Aldous Huxley who, in *The Perennial Philosophy*, defined this similarity as 'The metaphysics that recognises a divine Reality ... Rudiments (of which) may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed form it has a place in every one of the higher religions.' I, too, had been much struck with Huxley's book. Great interest was to be expressed later in the possibility of there being a 'common core' to religious experiencing: Robert Runcie, when Archbishop of Canterbury, in a Foreword to an Appeal launched by the Alister Hardy Research Centre in 1990, said, 'If it can be shown that there is a 'common core' or 'ultimate sameness' to all religious experience, irrespective of creed, race or society, this could have profound implications for the evolution of common understanding across many of the current barriers which divide people in our world.'

Feeling fired by this approach, and following the progress of the Research Centre's work, I saw it as a great step forward when later in 2002, the opportunity came to start on a major new study of world-wide spiritual and religious experience, which was to become known as the Global Project. With studies undertaken in China, Russia, India, Taiwan, Japan, Turkey and Brazil, Prof Paul Badham was able to write in 2012 that research findings did seem to support the prediction by Alister Hardy (and the theologian John Hick) of religious experiencing being a human response to a transcendent Reality – Paul going on to say that there is 'much common ground between religions at the experiential level.'⁹ Since then studies have included spirit possession in Korea¹⁰, studies in the Brazilian mediumistic religion (Dr Emily Pierini), and shamanism in Korea (Dr Gregory Shushan)¹¹, the findings of which also seem to support this.

John Hick, who admitted to having had relatively rare religious experiences in his life, held that the world religions are all different interpretations of a basic infinite divine Reality which lies at the experiential roots of all religions. This might be expressed, he said, in different ways due to the different thought-forms of different cultures, but that the various religions represent equally 'valid' and 'real' experiences and apprehensions of the 'one divine reality'¹². He elaborated on this later in *An*

*Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*¹³. Calling it 'the Real', he said that 'we can (sic) experience the Real as its presence is mediated to us in the forms made possible by our limited human cognitive capabilities'.¹⁴ It is my personal opinion that there are many layers to Hick's 'the Real' that are not developed. Interestingly, R. W. J. Austin in *The Sufis of Andalusia*, described the Sufi belief as '... being no reality but the Reality (God) ... [which has] revealed itself from time to time quite independently of human will or effort'¹⁵ – how close this is to contemporary Western accounts of mystical experience, and to Hick's approach, developed later by Perry Schmidt-Leukel in *Religious Pluralism & Interreligious Theology*, Schmidt introduced a fractal view of religious diversity showing that no religious phenomenon exists isolated or uniquely specific, as was once surmised¹⁶. Neither book, though, mention the data provided by contemporary accounts of spiritual or religious experience, the work of the AHRERC or Hardy's 'natural theology'.¹⁷ Recently, I read that Jose Maria Vigil, in *Pluralist Theology: The Emerging Paradigm* (2007/1) posited the need for '... a 'trans-religious' theology ... a 'theology' ... that can be a common patrimony of humanity, situated beyond actual religions, in a simple human spirituality [my italics], lay, post religion, trans-religious ...'¹⁸.

I also believe that bringing in the non-religious element, too, is important: Research in China, part of the RERC global project yielded results that enabled Xinzhong Yeo and Paul Badham to draw interesting parallels between Chinese and British spirituality. They record that 64% of Chinese surveyed stated they were not committed either to religion or to atheism, compared with 65% of young people in Britain declaring themselves to be 'non-religious'. However in both cases, the term 'non-religious' went alongside openness to spiritual 'reality' and engagement in 'religious practices', or declaration of 'Christian' identity in the Population Census and some other cultural settings.¹⁹ A common declaration one hears today is, 'I'm spiritual, but not religious.' The AHRERC archive contains many accounts of spiritual experience reported by people saying that they were not religious, but agnostic or atheist. If there is a basic infinite divine Reality which lies at the experiential roots of all religions, as Hick and others maintain, this must also lie at the root of spiritual or religious experiences – Badham's 'common ground' of religion and religious experiencing.

Whilst we are all so very different in many ways, we all have many things in common too, experiencing the same emotions of hope, love, fear, hate, and being driven by similar motivations. And, even if not recognised, all of us are open to, and can be affected by, some sort of spiritual experiencing – despite this being decried by sceptics, and naturalists who would deny all forms of the transcendent whether theistic or non-theistic. There is a tendency in so many quarters to concentrate on specifics and differences with regard to culture, religion and politics, rather on that which is held in common. In today's world there is a need, whilst recognising diversity, to concentrate on seeking what is held in common and may be best for the common good. Sir Alister's vision seems to me to be of ever greater importance today. At the close of his book, *The Biology of God*²⁰, he expressed his belief that the systematic study of spiritual experience could work towards a faith in harmony with science, and which, just as science enlarges its horizons, could go forward and develop a faith to bind people together. Times change, and thoughts move on; perhaps a fresh look at Hardy's vision might be in order, to give continuing inspiration and guidance for the Centre's ongoing work?

I hope that the AHRERC will make its mark not only in theology, but in contributing to a better understanding of the part that spirituality and spiritual experiencing can play in the harmonisation of relations between science and spirituality, and between people and religion. It is interesting in this context that the Scientific & Medical Network recently organised an event with the title, *The Quest for Harmony: A unifying principle in spirituality, science, sustainability and health-care*.^{21 22} Perhaps

development of a 'spiritualology' stemming from the primal ground of contact with Hick's Ultimate Reality, 'whether called God or not', might emerge to embrace both theology and humanism and other relevant isms. Spirituality is universal – all the major religions subscribe to the Golden Rule – a sentiment generally accepted. I believe that there *is* a 'common core', a core common to all religions and to all people of faith and no-faith, which is both transcendent and immanent, and that that core and motivator is 'love'. And my one simple hope is that at least the message of our spiritual and religious experiences might collectively, as well as individually, bear fruit as contributions to a metaphysic and faith that places love and unity as the primal spiritual law, one that should take precedence over and above the arguments that divide us – unity in differentiation.

John Franklin



Celebration, John Franklin's Retirement as the Society's Honorary Secretary, at Open Day 2015

- ¹ Alister Hardy, *The Divine Flame*, 1978, Oxford RERU.
- ² Alister Hardy, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 1979.
- ³ Edward Robinson, *The Original Vision* 1977, Oxford RERU
- ⁴ Edward Robinson, *This Time-bound Ladder*, 1977, Oxford RERU
- ⁵ Alister Hardy, *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, 1979, p.142
- ⁶ David Hay, *Alister Hardy – Biologist of the Spirit*, RERC Occasional Paper 19 (2nd Series) 1998
- ⁷ Essex Hall Lecture, 'Science and the quest for God', recorded by David Hay in *Biology of God* (2011 p. 200)
- ⁸ Reproduced as Occasional Paper No. 12 (2nd Series), 1997, p.6
- ⁹ Paul Badham, 'Religious Experience, a Comparative Approach', paper to the Leicester Theological Society, March 2012.
- ¹⁰ Dr D Schlottmann, 'Spirit Possession in Korean Shaman Rituals' (*RERC Journal for the Study of Religious Experience* vol 4, 2018, (special issue 'Religion, Culture and Extraordinary Experience'). Dr Schlottmann records belief in the authenticity of the transcendent revelation is the foundation of Korean shamanism religion, noting a culturally bound, indigenous perspective that perceives spiritual experiences as a reality in their own right.
- ¹¹ *RERC Journal for the Study of Religious Experience*, Issue 4, 2018
- ¹² Hick J. *God and the Universe*, (1973). Mahatma Gandhi saw 'The essence of all religions is one. Only their approaches are different.' Known to the mystics, Rumi (1207-1273) wrote 'The lamps are different but the Light is the same; it comes from Beyond.' (*Mathnavi* III 1259)

- ¹³ Hick J, [1989] 2004. Hick defined the divine Reality as 'the Real *an sich*,' itself ultimately undefinable and unknowable, but which may be experienced in a personal way as 'the divine Thou' which he called 'the Real: Personae,' or as a divine absolute, which he called 'the Real: Impersonae.' In both cases, he said, the adherents referred to what is experienced as 'the Real *an sich*'.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, p.xxii
- ¹⁵ R. W. J. Austin, *The Sufis of Andulasia* (1988) p. 51
- ¹⁶ Perry Schmidt-Leukel, *Religious Pluralism & Interreligious Theology*, 2017
- ¹⁷ Alister Hardy *The Living Stream*, 1953, p.11. 'The Natural Theology that I am interested in concerns Theism that is derived empirically from the study of nature, man and human history.'
- ¹⁸ Jose Maria Vigil, in *Pluralist Theology: The Emerging paradigm*, Concilium (2007/1), p. 36
- ¹⁹ Yeo X. & Badham P. *Religious Experience in Contemporary China*, (2007) pp. 181-2.
- ²⁰ Hardy, A, *The Biology of God* (1972), pp 232-233.
- ²¹ 70th Birthday Celebration for HRH Prince Charles, Canterbury Cathedral Precinct, 17 November 218.

Marian MacPolin, Membership Secretary 2012-2017; West Wales local group
Organiser, 2010-2012

My introduction to Sir Alister Hardy and the work of the RERC began in 2003 when, having been inspired in Ireland by a lecture from a visiting professor from Lampeter, as a mature student of 60-something, I sold up and moved to Wales to do an MA in Lampeter University. Having always been interested in spirituality and in world religions, I followed the MA course in *The Study of Religions: Religious Experience*. Thus began my love affair with Wales and Lampeter and the University in particular, and my 3 years as a mature student were some of the most enjoyable of my life. So much so that I became one of those many students who stayed on in Lampeter after graduation and I only left, somewhat reluctantly, in 2017.



The University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter

Memories and dates of those early days are rather hazy now but I do remember enjoying the small, friendly family environment which was Lampeter University then. The TRIS department, then housed in the Sheik Khalifa building in College Street, was the focus for lectures and I remember, on asking where the Religious Experience library was, being told 'Follow the singing until you see a smiling face' – which I did and up in the attic space discovered the ever-cheerful, tuneful and helpful Anne Watkins who initiated me into the riches of the little library. This was later incorporated into the main University library.

In those happy days I remember the excitement of deepening my knowledge of world religions, especially Buddhism about which I knew hardly anything, and which I found very attractive. I was also very inspired by reading some of the hundreds of accounts of people's religious experiences in the archive, at that time still in hard copy.* Outside of lectures there were regular meetings of a local Alister Hardy Society study group in Lampeter, facilitated in those days by Dr Pat Craig. The shared experiences of the participants in this group were always inspirational and educational and, like the archive, brought to life all the academic theories I was studying. Some years later I became the facilitator of this group, which met regularly with members of other AHS groups in Wales, and led to the yearly Gatherings in Llantarnam Abbey which still continue.

Sometime in 2012 I found myself agreeing to be the Membership Secretary for the Alister Hardy Society, which had approximately 300 members then, a job I did until 2015 when other demands on my time necessitated my retirement. It was an interesting time, as I got to put faces on many of the names on the membership list when I attended Committee meetings and other events.

Though no longer living in Wales, the bi-annual arrival of *De Numine* keeps me up-do-date with happenings and exciting developments in the area of Religious and Spiritual Experience and brings back very happy memories of my time in Lampeter. Congratulations on RERC's 50th birthday!

Marian MacPolin

*The accounts were kept in boxes outside the AH library then, and were a delight to read, most in handwriting, all redolent of the writer's personality – I will never forget this experience, sadly not available any more. While the archive's availability online is a valuable research resource, nothing can replace the magic, the non-verbal messages, conveyed by the handwritten letters (Ed.)

Mary Cook Organiser of the South East Wales (SEW) Group and Co-organiser of the annual Llantarnam Gathering

How I came across Alister Hardy's work

'Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a presence or power, whether you call it God or not, which is different from your everyday self?

I wasn't sure in retrospect which paper I saw the Question in, but I know it was before I met my husband-to-be, so it must have been 1969. I was en route with my mother – I cannot remember where to – when we stopped for a coffee at an imposing hotel. Whilst waiting for the drinks I picked up a large newspaper. I scanned the first page, then turned at random towards the back of the paper, and in a column of ads, low down on the right-hand-side my eye was caught by a small ad. 'Alister Hardy' lettered in bold. I read 'spiritual experiences', and felt this could just be an answer to my deep hope. I noted the details down. Once home, I wrote down an account of my childhood experience and sent it off. Apart from my 9 year-old friend at the time, I had never told anybody about my

experience. Hence my feeling on seeing the advertisement that somehow I could share this, even if only with something as impersonal as a research department! It certainly was to me proof that the Spiritual existed. And I needed to let people know. Would Alister Hardy be offering a way forward?

What the Alister Hardy Society has meant to me

The years passed – I attended AHS events, and met some very interesting people, I read *De Numine* and these two aspects of the Alister Hardy enterprise *were* my society – my meeting of minds and souls! The years passed – then out of the blue I was contacted by another member; we met, exchanged something of our experiences, and found a real resonance. We felt we had an opportunity to begin a group. We each would bring along friends with whom we had already shared something of our spiritual insights, and thus, in the autumn of 2010, the South East Wales group was born. . The Alister Hardy Society had brought us together.

Reflections from the present day

Religions teach, but through lenses of human construction, and yet the ‘Power’ that was within Hardy’s Question – the Power that changes lives – is truly beyond all comprehension, and always will be, despite our best efforts to understand. But for those of us who have had a glimpse beyond the everyday self’ – something spiritually special – that glimpse can become the most important thing in our lives. Yet we so often keep it to our-selves. We may have given up hope of finding like-minded people. We may feel like shouting what we have experienced ‘from the rooftops’, so to speak, but as the experience is so precious we fear to share it, because each is unique and personal; we fear it will not be taken seriously – or worse, scorned!

Although not his primary purpose, Alister Hardy provided a way we could share our experience of what I must call the Spiritual – if only with an impersonal archive. Hardy saw this work as being an opportunity for people, from whatever background, to contribute, and for the reader of these experiences to remove any cultural and religious lenses and see clearly that we are *all* connected in the deepest sense with the Spiritual and with each other.

We in the SEW group are currently looking ahead to our 2019 programme, which includes our Abbey weekend, and which though run by the SEW group, is open to all. Considering the fiftieth anniversary is upon us, and we find ourselves reviewing the past, we must all be looking to how best we can ensure a healthy and prosperous next fifty years for the AHT. Considering how our national population has diversified during these fifty years, and the opportunities for communication that the internet and social media have enabled, the time is fertile for growing Hardy’s vision in much wider fields.

Mary Cook



Early Pictures of the Llantarnam Gathering



Group around the Mandala table



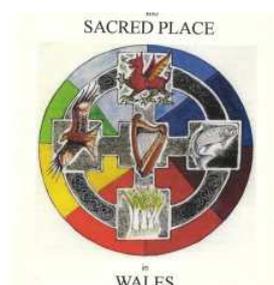
Circle dance



Gundestrup Cauldron, late La Tène

The Llantarnam Abbey residential weekend gatherings were initiated by Roger Coward, AHS member, with the overall theme 'Mandala', exploring the significance of sacred space. When Patricia Murphy and Mary Cook took over they widened the brief, completing a seven year cycle. Mary Cook continues to run weekend meetings at Llantarnam under the auspices of the South East Wales local group.

The replica of the Gundestrup Cauldron, shown above, was the centrepiece of this early Llantarnam gathering. The circle dance, pictured at the same gathering, became a tradition in succeeding years. Both photos illustrate how the Mandala theme continued in various forms through the years at Llantarnam. (Ed.)



Andy Burns, Reminiscences of the AHS, the RERC and Hardy's watercolours

My first contact with Sir Alister Hardy and the RERC was whilst I was studying for a BTh (Oxon) at Westminster College. I was fortunate to have Peggy Morgan as one of my tutors and coincidentally she was also Director of the RERC which was sited on the Westminster campus. Peggy introduced me to Hardy's research and along with other undergraduates I spent time in the archive looking at the many and varied accounts. It was a very interesting experience and I considered completing my dissertation on a topic related to religious experiences. However, in the end I chose a different area to research, my interest in animal ethics and Buddhism taking priority at that time.



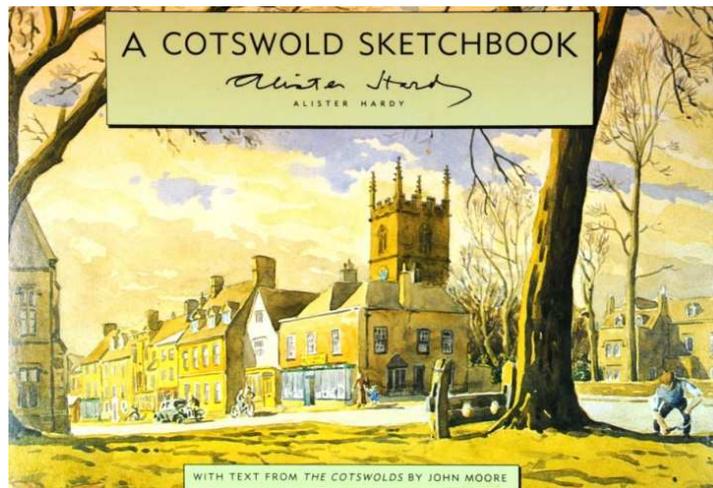
However, this was only the beginning of my own journey into religious experiences and I was lucky to complete my first degree at a time when Peggy was establishing an MA in the study of religious experience. This was initially under the auspices of Westminster College but later at the University of Wales, Lampeter, which coincided with the archive transferring there in August 2000. Peggy supported my application for the MA and I joined the course in the first year of its inception. Several years later, when the subject of a research topic came up, I knew immediately that my MA dissertation would have to involve the accounts in the RERC archive. I have an interest in Eastern religions, and knowing that Hardy had always intended to expand his request for religious experiences into other world faiths, I felt it would be interesting to explore Buddhist religious experiences in the archive, not really knowing at that time if any existed. It was a very interesting and rewarding time and I identified over 80 religious experiences which were Buddhist in nature so I had ample materials for my research.

I had joined the Alister Hardy Society at that time, and attended local meetings in London and the annual Open Days in Oxford. When the Revd Jonathan Robinson became the Chair of the Society he invited me to be his Vice Chair; we were friends from our days in Lampeter on the MA programme. When Jonathan stepped down some years later I became Chair and held that position until the change in status when the Trust became a 'Charitable Incorporated Organisation' and the old Society was absorbed in to the new charity.



Alongside my academic interest in the RERC I was also fortunate to see a copy of Hardy's book, *A Cotswold Sketchbook*. This book, together with a collection of his watercolours then on display at the University of Wales, inspired me to learn more about this lesser known side of his life. I discovered that he taken up painting in order to relieve the stress of setting up a new department, Zoology and Oceanography, at the University of Hull. Using only his pedal cycle, Hardy travelled through the Cotswolds from the city of Bath in the North to the town of Burford in the South, painting images of the villages, churches and landscapes that he visited on his journeys. He found calm and pleasure in painting, saying it was a 'most refreshing tonic in reviving my energy in other work', whilst his wife Sylvia added that it was his 'bottle of medicine'.

He eventually produced a book of his watercolours which was published in 1984, with a reprint following in 1988. Sadly it is no longer in print.



Hardy had previously completed many black & white sketches during his exploration of the Southern Ocean on the research vessel *Discovery* in 1925 and these are very different **from** his watercolours but show a remarkable attention to detail in recording images of sea life, butterflies and views of the various places that he visited during the two year expedition at sea. In 2014 I was privileged to follow in his footsteps journeying though the Cotswolds photographing the places that he had painted almost 80 years earlier in order to compare the scenes then and now. It was a very interesting experience which brought me closer to Hardy and gave me a real appreciation of his art which I was able to share with others by giving a presentation at Members' Day in Oxford. Hardy is understandably remembered for his academic career and setting up the original RERU at Manchester College in 1969, but I think this lesser known side of his life also deserves to be recalled and celebrated too.

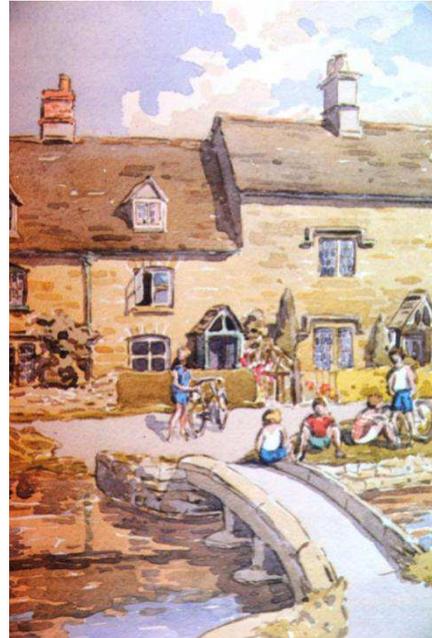
I have included a small selection of images showing Hardy's watercolours and drawings alongside my own photographs of the locations as they are today which will give a glimpse of his talent as a watercolour artist.

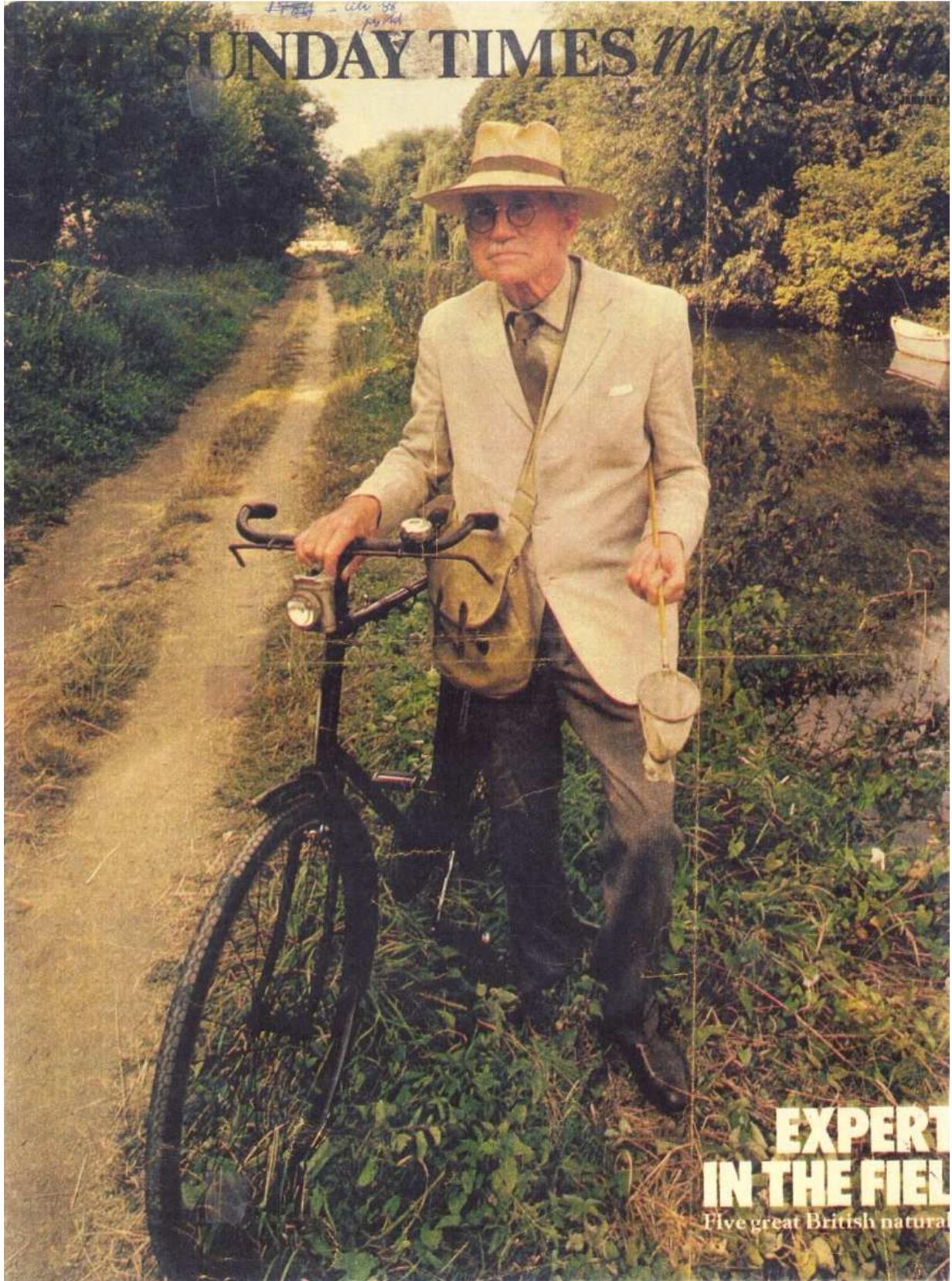
Andrew Burns





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NEW TRUSTEES

I am very pleased to introduce the two new Trustees appointed to the AHT:

Dr Tom Farley – Hardy family Trustee



I am delighted to be the new family representative on the Alister Hardy Trust. I sit writing this short summary at my grandfather's desk which brings back memories of his study in Oxford. The desk was near the window in a room full of interesting zoological specimens, books and memorabilia that he had collected throughout his life. It was the base for much of his prolific work and I have always found this inspiring.

I was born in London in 1962 and lived most of my childhood in Hertfordshire. From an early age I have enjoyed mathematics and science, particularly physics and the understanding of how things work. I have also always been interested in my grandfather's zoological career, including his continuous plankton recording research, his controversial hypothesis of man's aquatic past, which still appears to produce strong debate, and his scientific approach to the study of spiritual experience. On this last topic, I am looking forward to supporting the work of the Trust.

I studied for my first degree in Applied Physics at The University of Bath then moved to the University of Oxford to study for a D.Phil. in Solid State Physics. While in Oxford, I met my wife, Gill, who was in Oxford training to be an Occupational Therapist. My first job after leaving University was in the Research and Development division of Alcan International, the world's largest aluminium rolling company at that time. Here I developed my scientific skills, then in 2003 I was part of a group that left Alcan to form the independent aluminium technical consultancy company, Innoval Technology, which I am pleased to say continues to this day.

I decided to retire from the aluminium industry at the end of 2017 to spend more time with my family and to pursue my interests and hobbies. Gill and I have a son, Ollie, who is currently studying for a PhD in Physics at the University of Durham. I think my grandfather, being a Darwinist, would have enjoyed seeing how his scientific genes and those of his wife, Sylvia (also a zoologist) are continuing to pass down to future generations. To relax I enjoy cooking and I have always enjoyed drawing. I am looking forward to the challenges of watercolour painting now that I have more time.

Another inherited talent to be explored? See Andy Burns' illustrated article on Sir Alister's watercolours on pages 49-51 (Ed.)

Dr David Rousseau – AHT Membership Trustee

I am greatly honoured to have been elected as a Membership Trustee of the AHT at the 2018 AGM. I look forward to my service in this role, and will do my best to give the membership an effective voice in the deliberations of the Board of Trustees of the AHT. I would like to invite members to discuss their ideas/concerns with me via email at david.rousseau@systemsphilosophy.org



This is a brief note about me for members who may not know me. I have a long standing interest in the phenomena of religious, mystical and spiritual experiences (RSMs), and have pursued and advocated scientific research in this area for some time. My principal interest is in the nature of the mind-body relationship, and in how scientific studies of RSMs can help us deepen our scientific understanding of our spiritual nature. My own research in this area employs holistic thinking and systems science, which I learnt about in my earlier career as an engineer involved in complex systems development.

My educational background spans Engineering (with a specialisation in Systems Engineering), Philosophy (with a specialisation in Philosophy of Mind) and Religious Studies (with a specialisation in spiritual experiences). My early career involved more than 20 years in engineering and management roles in the aerospace and semiconductor industries. In 2007 I returned to academia, and in 2011 completed a PhD in Religious Studies, undertaken at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Lampeter. For this research I used systems philosophy and system science to investigate the implications of near-death experiences (NDEs) for Scientific Naturalism.

My current research is focused on advances in General Systems Theory and its application in the scientific investigation of philosophical questions such as the unity of knowledge, the nature of Nature, the brain-consciousness relationship, and the ontological foundations of moral and aesthetic intuitions. In my view systems science and holistic thinking can help us to discover insights hidden to the more traditional reductionistic and physicalistic approaches to investigating and understanding RSMs.

I have over many years served in various roles in several research-oriented charitable organizations, including the Society for Psychical Research (of which Sir Alister was the President 1965-1969), the British Association for the Study of Spirituality, and the International Society for the Systems Sciences.

I trust that my work on the board of the AHT will help to give our members a strong voice in how the AHT advances the mission of Sir Alister. More information about me can be found here: <http://www.systemsphilosophy.org/david-rousseau.html>



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

The Religious Experience Research Centre, Lampeter, has been quite busy in 2018. One highlight was the one-day conference in July 2018. This time we embedded the conference in a longer Interfaith conference which focused on spirituality. This way we attracted more people and presented the work of the RERC to a new audience. Our day had the topic 'Spirituality and Wellbeing: inter-religious perspectives'. The Keynote speaker was Professor William West, Visiting Professor at the University of Chester and Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Counselling Studies at the University of Manchester. Among the other speakers were Mark Seed, AHT member, who spoke about his work on spiritual health of children, and Dr Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen who spoke about wellbeing and disability. (Information about these papers, including some PowerPoint presentations, can be downloaded from the RERC website.)

The next conference will be different as we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of RERC with a three-day conference, followed by a shorter Interfaith conference. Thanks to the support of the AHT we were able to invite three keynote speakers: Professor Ann Taves (Santa Barbara, California) Professor Jeremy Carrette (Kent University) and Professor Leslie Francis (Warwick University), Chairman of the AHT. Professor Taves, a former President of the American Academic of Religion, will give the Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture. She is internationally well known for her publications on religious experience. Other speakers will be selected via a general Call for Papers that was circulated via various mailing lists and on Facebook. We also have a specific RERC conference website with additional information and hope that many members can attend the conference:

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/humanities-performingarts/rece50/>

Other highlights of the year are our publications. Shortly after the 2018 conference the next issue of the online Journal for the Study of Religious Experience – <http://rerc-journal.tsd.ac.uk/> – came out with an article by the late Edith Turner. Guest editor was Dr Gregory Shushan, ably supported by Thomas Pitchford. This issue also features an article by Dr Jack Hunter, who was made recently made an honorary research fellow of the RERC. The issue after this one will again be more general, concerned with the study of religious experience, and will include an article by Marcus Braybrooke (based on his Alister Hardy Memorial lecture in Oxford in October 2018) and Hans van Willenswaard writing about Sir Alister and his work. Work on the next book to be published by the RERC continues, co-edited by myself and Jeff Leonardi, honorary research fellow with the RERC. The title is *Spirituality and Wellbeing: Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of religious experience and health* and will be published by Equinox in 2019. Though it will not be finished in time for the conference we hope to have some pre-publication information available.

The third highlight this year was the donation of the academic library of Professor Paul Badham, former director of the RERC. We are grateful to the Trust for covering the cost of transport to Lampeter. As with the David Hay library, the books will be identified in the catalogue as RERC property and the Paul Badham Collection.

Unfortunately, we will need to say goodbye next July to Jonathan Andrews whose contract will not be renewed further by the Trust. He hopes that he can incorporate all the lost accounts which he found while working on his inventory of the archive during the remaining time. He prepared a second small exhibition about Sir Alister Hardy which was on display in the library in November. A third exhibition will hopefully be on display during the conference in July. I want to use this opportunity to express my

thanks to Jonathan who has done an excellent job in the archive. He will be missed as he is the main contact for members who have questions about the accounts in the archive. He has helped members searching the online database, and also supported individuals when they tried to access specific accounts (e.g., submitted by them several years ago). While Thomas will continue assisting members with access to books, and collecting the confidentiality forms required for access to the archive, it will be difficult in the absence of Jonathan to reply to specific requests about the archive in future.

This change comes at a time that sees an expansion in the study of religious and spiritual experience. Among members accessing the online database are scholars from various parts of the world and postgraduate students from different universities in the UK. In addition, we see a growing interest in the study of religious experience among our students at Trinity Saint David. The module 'Religious Experience Today' is popular among students of various MA programmes within the Faculty, and the Master by Research (MRes) in Religious Experience recruits well. The first student of that programme will graduate in July 2019 together with a student of the MRes in Study of Religions, whose dissertation was about spiritual healing. There are currently 9 students writing dissertations and 4 new students still in part 1 of the programme. In addition, two of my PhD students work on topics in the wider area of religious and spiritual experience, and I will teach a new module on spiritual and religious experience to undergraduate students, beginning in January 2019, in which I will introduce the RERC and the work of Sir Alister Hardy.

Bettina Schmidt



Report from the Director of Communications

My full DoC report, tabled at the AGM – covering Members' Day, the afternoon panel on research and the issues raised during the Members' Feedback session, which were subsequently discussed at the AGM – would be too long for *De Numine*. I have summarized all these aspects below, but if anyone would like the full report as presented to the AGM, please email me or Andy Burns.

EVENTS 2018

Members Day October 2018

About forty people came to the Oxford Quaker Meeting House on a glorious autumn day. Usually Andy Burns and I run Members' Day together, but this year he was absent, due to surgery in August and good wishes were extended to him for a speedy recovery.

The Annual Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture

The Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke, Joint President of the World Congress of Faiths and a long-time supporter of the AHT, gave the Memorial Lecture on *Meeting in the Cave of the Heart, The importance of religious experience to theology and interspirituality*. In a wide-ranging and inspiring lecture, Marcus wove personal memories and his own spiritual development into the wider context of theological thinking and interfaith activity. In his early years, Marcus had heard Sir Alister Hardy speak and had been impressed by his stand against the sceptical climate of his age and by his vision of religious experience as underlying the various world faiths. This lecture will be published in 2019 in the online open access *Journal for the Study of Religious Experience* – erc-journal.tsd.ac.uk/



Marcus and Marianne on Members Day

Discussion Panel

Revd Professor June Boyce-Tillman, Professor of Applied Music at Winchester University; Professor Bettina Schmidt, Director of the RERC at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in Lampeter and Revd Canon Professor Leslie Francis, Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust, spoke on *Current Research into Religious Experiences and what this is telling us*. This gave members the opportunity to hear about the research undertaken by the Professors and to question them. Three very different aspects of research were presented, offering an insight into academic research in our field. These are very brief summaries:

June Boyce-Tillman: An article will appear in the autumn *De Numine* on June's wonderfully illustrated talk, which ended with a moving piece of music by John Tavener. She began by noting that it has taken some time for academe to accept spirituality into its study areas and that some are still suspicious of it and the methodologies used to study it.

June then described the journey of her own research and noted the failure of the secularism that characterised modernity and a growth of interest in spirituality in many areas, some of which she was involved in – work, education, the arts. June recognised that there was a growth of people not needing religious or doctrinal beliefs, but who found that 'secular' music can act sacramentally in giving a sense of the divine. She has explored this in a series of books.

Bettina Schmidt: Bettina's background as cultural anthropologist influences the kind of research currently undertaken at the RERC Lampeter. Her own research method is qualitative and she conducts ethnographic research and interviews people about their experience from a personal perspective. This research has led to several publications among them her monograph (with the subtitle *Anthropology of Religious Experience*) as well as an edited volume about the *Study of Religious Experience* (derived from the conference in 2014 that re-launched the RERC). She also supervises several postgraduate students in areas of religious experience.

Leslie Francis: Leslie Francis discussed his study, *Exploring the fruit of religious experience within the Greer tradition: Effects on personal affect and on religious affect*. This builds on a research tradition established by Greer in Northern Ireland in the 1980s and extends this tradition to the Republic of Ireland to explore the effect of having and acknowledging religious experience on religious affect and personal affect. The research concludes from these findings that within the contexts of the Christian

or post-Christian cultures of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland the fruit of having and acknowledging religious experience (as specifically captured by the Greer question) includes holding a more positive view of the Christian tradition and living happier lives.

AHT joint conference with the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies

On 14th April the AHT held a joint conference with the Churches' Fellowship in Oxford on the theme of *Meditation, Stillness and Spiritual Experience*. Both speakers, Dr Serena Roney-Dougal and the Reverend Professor June Boyce-Tillman were excellent and those who attended thoroughly enjoyed the event. However, with an attendance of less than forty people in all, both organisations made a loss.

RERC Conference in Lampeter

The annual RERC conference was on the topic *Spirituality and Wellbeing: inter-religious perspectives*. The Keynote speaker was Professor William West, Visiting Professor at the University of Chester and Honorary Senior Research Fellow in Counselling Studies at the University of Manchester. Among the other speakers were Mark Seed, AHT member, who spoke about his work on spiritual health of children, and Dr Brenda Llewellyn Ihssen who spoke about wellbeing and disability. The conference was embedded in a longer Interfaith Conference which attracted additional audience.

EVENTS 2019

RERC 50th Anniversary Conference

This will be held 1st-3rd July in Lampeter. Keynote speakers are Professor Ann Taves, Santa Barbara, California, Professor Leslie Francis of the AHT, and Professor Jeremy Carrette, Kent University. Professor Taves is a former President of the American Academic of Religion and internationally well known for her publications on religious experience. She will give the Alister Hardy Memorial Lampeter lecture. More information is on the website: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/humanities-performingarts/rece50/> and see Bettina Schmidt's report above, and Events, page 82.

Members Day, 19th October in Oxford

Dr Rupert Sheldrake gave the first Annual Memorial Lecture in 1987 and he has been invited to give the 50th Anniversary Lecture at the special Anniversary Celebration in Oxford on 19th October 2019. There will also be a lecture by Dr Mark Fox, and reminiscences of Sir Alister and his work. The day will finish with a celebratory reception. The venue is the Oxford Quaker Meeting House as usual.

See Events, page 83, for more details.

DE NUMINE

To celebrate 50 years since Sir Alister Hardy founded the Religious Experience Research Unit in Manchester College, Oxford, there will be two special issues of *De Numine*. Everyone has been invited to contribute photos and memories or tell us what in Sir Alister's research inspired you and what it led to in your life and work.

DoC ACTIVITIES

I have updated our publicity leaflets and am now the contact person for membership and events, working with Membership Secretary Margaret West on the former and Andy Burns on the latter.

As usual, I led a few Quiet Days this year and I also spoke at an Anthroposophist conference on *Angels*. As one of the speakers at the 2018 CANA conference, *We Are All One, Towards Universal Spirituality: Journeying with Christianity*, I gave every participant a copy of the AHT publicity leaflet and posed the Hardy Question. Almost every hand went up to answer in the affirmative and people were then encouraged to share their spiritual experiences.

The AHT was well represented at a celebration in honour of Professor Ursula King's 80th Birthday at Bristol University in March, organised by her former PhD student Dr Dominic Corrywright and our own Professor Bettina Schmidt.

The Danish reporter, Charlotte Rørth came to visit me as I am trying to help her get her best-selling book, *I met Jesus* translated into English. As a result of her familiarity with my book, hers includes a chapter about the work of the AHT and the RERC.

Film

There is a video clip on Facebook, a trailer from a film entitled *Afterlife – The Documentary* (www.afterlifedoc.com) in which Jayne Harris interviewed various people, including Toyah Willcox, Penny Sartori, Rupert Sheldrake and me. HDP Productions are working alongside Last Independent TV to produce a 90 minute film for the Birmingham Film Festival 2019.

BTA

The British Teilhard Association, officially dissolved in 2017, retains the British Teilhard Network website: www.teilhard.org.uk The BTA used its funds to endow an annual Teilhard Seminar at Durham University's Centre for Catholic Studies.

SUMMARY

The AHT continues to thrive, with a lively Members' Day and an additional one-day conference; students joining for access to the RERC Archive and local groups enjoying informal meetings. Next year we are looking forward to celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Religious Experience Research Unit in Oxford by Sir Alister Hardy, looking back at what has been achieved and forward to a rich future of further research and a variety of activities.

Marianne Rankin



Accounts for the Alister Hardy Trust for the year ended 31st July 2018

As is usual for the Spring edition of *De Numine*, I write a brief summary of the financial situation of the Trust for the financial year which ended last July – this is particularly for those who were unable to attend our AGM. This has been another year of much activity, largely owing to the generous bequests received over the past few years. We are 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. Whilst we are showing a significant deficit, this is in line with my 5-year forecast, a forecast which is kept under review and revised in time for the May Trustees' meeting. Our investments, under the guidance of our stockbroker, have performed well and with such uncertainty over Brexit (which

may be resolved by the time you read this) and the world tariff situation, there is no suggestion at this juncture that we make any changes. Unfortunately, unless we receive a significant increase in our funds, we shall have to start drawing on our invested reserves before the end of this academic year.

I set out below a short summary of the accounts – a full set of accounts is available on request for those who wish to receive them. Just let me have your name and address and I'll send you a copy. I would particularly highlight the most significant payments of £23,855 in respect of supporting the RERC, Lampeter, which of course funds the two members of staff who look after the archive and the AHT books, and the payment of £16,000 to support the Alister Hardy Chair at Warwick University.

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| <u>Income</u> (including subscriptions £3885, and gift aid receipts £403) | £16,258 |
| <u>Expenditure</u> (including donation to UWTSD of £23,855, various honoraria and additional expenses associated with increased activity on the part of volunteers and trustees, and a donation to Warwick University of £16,000) | £66,488 |
| <u>Net deficit</u> | <u>£50,230</u> |
| <u>Fixed Assets:</u> Tangible assets (mainly books and works of art) | £50,562 |
| <u>Current assets:</u> Bank accounts and invested funds | £384,540 |
| <u>Total assets less current liabilities:</u> | <u>£434,380</u> |

The accounts were unanimously approved by the Trustees at the AGM held on 22nd November, 2018.

Dr David Greenwood, Honorary Treasurer

Local Group Reports

Oxford & Cotswolds Group

Beth Crutch and I are co-chairs of this friendly group, and we continue to meet in the home of Clare Phillips in Kidlington, and occasionally at Eleonore Bruyere's house in Witney. We are usually around a dozen or more, gathering for coffee and snacks on the first Saturday morning of each month.

Over the past year members of the group have taken turns to present on topics including *The Gospel of Thomas*, *The Rosicrucians*, *FWH Myers*, *Science and the materialist paradigm*, *Dreams*, and *Spiritual links with pets*. In addition we had a guest presenter, Karl Gunter, who demonstrated an amazing collection of Singing Bowls, and Marianne Rankin came to tell us about the work of the Alister Hardy Trust and how she became involved.

We are a mixture of Alister Hardy members and CFPSS members, and several newcomers have recently joined the AHT. Our relaxed conversations allow everyone a chance to contribute, and we remind people to submit their own experiences to the AHT archive when they can.

Rhonda Riachi

Bangor and North Wales group

Here in Gwynedd and Anglesey active membership of groups such as AHT, SMN and the One Spirit Alliance is so small that we have to act 'as one' to come close to having a viable activity. Even that would not be enough: so our public face is a Meetup Group (*Bangor ... Beyond*): a great way to get any open meeting listed on-line and thus to introduce your ideas to the wider public.

Over the years we've realised that the old 'get a speaker in' approach to meetings just doesn't work: it's too passive, too 'us and them'. So I've long aimed to host more inclusive, interactive, 'meetings', where anyone drawn to attend is treated as one of us from the start. Anyone and everyone could well have had a spiritual experience (as we in the AHT call them).

But even all this wasn't really working: numbers were still too small to sustain regular meetings. There was just too much onus on one person (usually me!) to be at the appointed time and place only for no one else to join me. So we stopped trying so hard! Given the right location and right intent, it's possible to have the most amazing spiritual experience on one's own. So why not have 'meetings' that focus on enable that!

We had already been meeting in Bangor University's Botanic Gardens (Treborth, on the bank for the Menai Straits) which everyone finds stimulating and relaxing at the same time, no mean feat! On numerous occasions I'd sat there on my own. Rather than bemoan the fact that nobody else came, I took the opportunity for quiet reflection: and, aside from the extra time out which I could have done without) had some wonderful period of communion with the nature.

If I could have such experiences, then so could anyone else! The other semi-regulars agreed and we re-described the 'meeting'. 2-3pm every Tuesday was an opportunity to meet up in the gardens. If no one else came, we just 'meet' the birds, bees and flowers instead! It's worked remarkably well. No resentment at 'wasted time' and no judgement of a 'failed meeting' if nobody turns up. And, on the few occasions we do actually meet fellow members, a natural, flowing, deep sharing is usually guaranteed ... because we're in the flow; allowing rather than trying. Isn't that the recipe for the best spiritual experiences?

Keith Beasley

South East Wales Group and Llantarnam Gathering

Since the beginning of this year we have been meeting at Llantarnam Abbey. We thought this venue might give us the opportunity to expand the group. We have become a group of friends, and have not been seeking new members, yet a few more have joined us to date. We meet four times a year, and seem happy to continue this format, but we discuss our future direction at the end of each year. I am very much aware that because we meet in the afternoon, we are restricted to the retired or the self-employed, and that maybe we need to discuss this at our next meeting. Our autumn meeting is now incorporated into the AHT Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey.

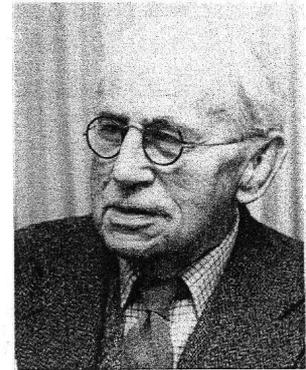
May I point out that although our group runs the event, it is open to all members – as indeed all our group events are.

2018 AHT/SEW Gathering at Llantarnam Abbey, 28th – 30th September

'Back to Basics' was the theme for the Residential weekend this year. Feeling that we always need to revisit our *raison d'être*, I displayed a photo of a thoughtful Alister Hardy taken from John Franklin's *Exploration into Spirit* together with the Mission Statement of the AHT. Both of these functioned as a focus for our 'Back to Basics' weekend.

Mission Statement

'The Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre and Society seeks through research and study to contribute to the understanding of transcendent, spiritual or religious experiences and their role in the evolution of consciousness and religious reflection as well as their impact upon individual lives and on society'.



Sir Alister Hardy, FRS

I would like to share what emerged from the opinions of participants, some expressed during the sessions, and some less formally in the breaks, as I feel them to be of fundamental importance today. These opinions formed the basis of the following points submitted to the Trust:

1. *Re-launching of the Hardy Question nationally.* A national relaunch should be seriously considered, Advances in IT mean that experiences would be far easier to process, and as we are a more ethnically diverse population now in relation to 50 years ago, the material collected would be richer. Our patrons do reflect a diversity of faiths, but perhaps, too, our trustees could begin to reflect this.

[The population represented by the Trustees is largely the AHT membership, Sir Alister's family, the RERC and academic connections to the AHT. This population is predominantly Christian, in terms of affiliation to organised religion. (It should be noted however that there are two Buddhist Trustees currently). At the Llantarnam Gatherings it became apparent that there was diversity, even polarity, in the context of adherence to religious organisations and rituals, or the preference for an individual spiritual path. (Ed.)]

2. *Archive.* What is the purpose of the archive? How is it used and by whom? I had explained, but the questioner felt that it was hidden away, out of sight, out of mind, and so of very limited value. One Member had tried to register in order to use the archive for her talk and had given up. Could we improve on the Archive's accessibility?

3. *Experiences sent to De Numine.* Could it be assumed that members are willing for their contribution to be submitted to the Archive unless they specifically ask for it not to be?

[If I as Editor receive an experience I would never pass it on – experiences have to be personally submitted to the Archive, so this really doesn't arise. (Ed.)]

4. *Mission Statement.* This ends with the words: '... as well as their impact upon individual lives and on society.' How are we fulfilling this part of the Mission? A new group member thought that within the Trust remit there is great potential to reach out to disaffected young adults. This member later expressed a wish to take an MA in Spiritual Experience. She would then feel in a position to address her concern. So maybe it is up to the younger members to take this forward. Hence the value of Lampeter's degree courses which encompass spiritual experience.

Mary Cook

'Back to Basics': the Weekend Gathering

13 of us were there on the Saturday, 10 on the other days; joining our core group of SEW members, we had three from the South East, and one from the South West of England. Everyone brought a wealth of experience and expertise, amply demonstrated below by summaries of the presentations given during the weekend:

Alister Hardy, his life and aims – and me!

Talk given by Mary Cook

The talk on Alister Hardy given by Mary Cook opened with an account of Sir Alister's life, beliefs and thoughts, taken from *The Spiritual Nature of Man*, and some passages from John Franklin's *Exploration into Spirit* were read out by group members. We learnt that whilst at Oundle School Sir Alister's walks in the Northampton countryside and his observations of the natural world provided a basis for his lifelong beliefs: he was aware on these walks of a presence that he could not define. War in 1914 interrupted his studies at Oxford University, but he vowed that if he should survive the war he would attempt to reconcile science and religion and pursue his view of evolution. He would also investigate his own experiences of what he called 'spirit'. He believed human beings to be spiritual beings and that spiritual experiences were universal. This belief in an abstract power shaped his outlook on life.

Mary then explored how her experiences might or might not exactly resonate with Hardy's feelings of 'an abstract power', but felt they were nevertheless in tune with, and of value to the Trust's research. During a period of silence which followed Mary's talk we reflected on what we as individuals had experienced in relation to what we had heard, and we then submitted questions (and/or inspirations) for the discussion which followed. I think Sir Alister would have approved.

from a report by Janis Waterhouse

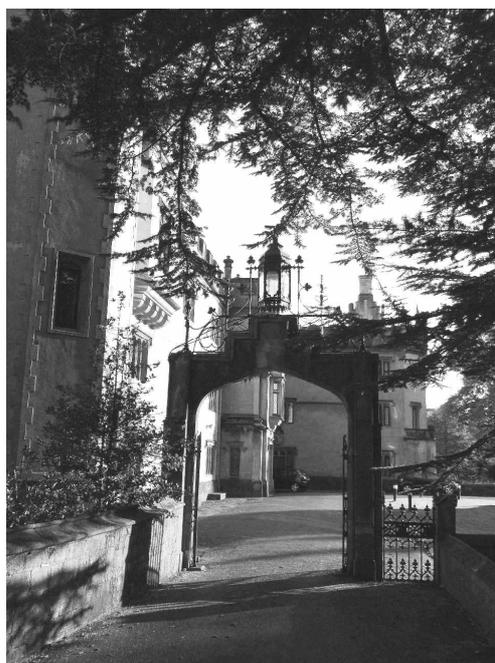
Our Human Journey: exploring spiritual awareness

Talk given by Jonathan Robinson.

Jonathan's talk was a wide-ranging and passionate exploration of human spirituality. Asking questions such as 'Who am I?' and 'Who are we in the depth of our being?', he suggested that some of us might sense answers from: being part of the world around us; the wilder places of the world; God – whatever was uppermost in our minds. He asked if we felt we were simply complex biological mechanisms with our body parts functioning during our lives or, 'something more' – part of a 'Higher Power' beyond our comprehension & measure, holding not only us but all life in being.

Acknowledging that our individual characteristics – date of birth, gender, ethnicity – distinguish us from other humans, Jonathan suggested that when we go deeper into ourselves – thoughts, feelings & imagination – we touch our true selves and go beyond our physical boundaries.

After discussing the relevance (or otherwise) of religious institutions to contemporary spiritual quests, Jonathan continued his discourse by turning to the matter of consciousness. The rational reductionist view is that this phenomenon is the result of the workings of our body, although science has never



proved this. Instead, Jonathan referred us to the cardiologist Dr. Pim van Lommel who likens consciousness to a field akin to that which contains Jungian archetypes, and to Rupert Sheldrake's theories of morphic fields and morphic resonance. In other words, he said, consciousness is mediated through the brain but not a product of our physical selves, and we are social & relational beings wanting to share and transcend the things that restrict and divide us. Quoting from Albert Einstein, 'separation is an optical illusion of our consciousness', Jonathan made a cogent plea for us to see that in essence 'we are all part of the One, interconnected and not separate beings'.

From a report by Val Evans

[For more detail on the subject of Jonathan's talk see his two-part article in *De Numine* issues 64 & 65 Ed.]

Seasons of the Soul

Talk given by Alan Underwood

Cycles seem to be a universal feature of human experience: the seasons of the year recur year after year; the lives of plants and animals follow these cycles, as do the apparent movements of stars and planets. Atmospheric cycles such as the nitrogen, carbon and water cycles are observable, as are solid rock cycles, and the movements of continental masses. Cycles may reflect a universal pattern of evolution or development, raising the key question: why should there not be cycles of the soul?

Alan illustrated the idea by contrasting two experiences from his personal spiritual journey: one of dark, one of light. He cited 'an unfamiliar form of darkness' when passing from sleep to wakefulness when he was 12, to the heightened awareness he experienced as an adult – 'a sea of soft yellow-pink light' – which he describes as being on 'a quantum level'. He relates these experiences to the Jungian concept of individuation, emerging from dark into light, and eventually to cosmic awareness.

From a report by Ken Davies

Dark and light within spiritual experience – winter and back

Talk given by Trudy Porter

To me, Trudy's presentation seemed to take the form of thoughts spoken aloud, of an introspective dialogue with her own soul. Within the context of light and darkness, she explored the connection and interplay between opposites, but from Nature's perspective, describing the change of the seasons, and providing astronomical examples such as the sun and moon, and philosophical concepts such as good and evil. She gave examples from a whole spectrum of seeming opposites.

I personally took Trudy's words as an invitation to discover 'Beauty' in everything and not just in the 'Light'. For instance, we would all agree that Spring and Summer are beautiful seasons as the Sun starts to rise higher and bring us brightness and warmth, but how many of us would actually consider Autumn and Winter equally beautiful, when the darkness sets in, the Earth becomes barren and Nature shows us its bitter face? Nevertheless, to use Trudy's own words: 'One cannot exist without the Other', and two words came into my mind as soon as Trudy finished her talk: 'Alternance' and 'Cyclicality'.

From a report by Annarita Ressa

Classification as a tool for understanding spiritual experiences

Talk given by Ken Rees

For there to be a spiritual experience, there has to be an experiencer, and as experiences are highly individual it may be difficult to classify what 'spiritual' means. So what is the constitution of the human being that has these experiences? Ken reviewed a sample of traditions and their human typologies to illustrate various concepts, from the relatively simple trinity of Mind/Body/Spirit to the rather more complex seven categories of the Theosophical Society, and several variations in between.

Given that humans have such experiences, it's natural that we want to understand and talk about them, to describe and share them, so the secondary activity is to conceptualise the experience. Paradoxically, words at some point may be ineffective in describing the experience, so there have been many attempts at classification to facilitate understanding and communication. Building on the work of William James and Edwin Starbuck, Alister Hardy developed his twelve category template for classification, including extra sensory perception, out-of-body and near-death experiences. Ken argued however that classification could actually be an obstacle to experience and real knowledge – gnosis – becoming merely a sophisticated language game especially in the context of an esoteric ideology.

In summary Ken thought that classification helped in sharing and understanding experiences but cautioned that the words aren't the experience, the finger pointing at the moon is not the moon itself. 'But one has to get there and just experience it, hoping that others will share it with you ... We have to be careful not to force possibly God-given experiences into man-made boxes.'

From a report by Ken Price



On Sunday morning, Annarita took us through a guided meditation on the elements, based on an experience she'd had whilst walking in the Pyrenees as a teenager.

Earth: on the ledge – on the edge, my feet, then legs become more heavy – my centre of gravity lowered, greater stability – oneness with the earth

Water: waterfall – in a group, am reticent to strip; if alone there are no inhibitions – I strip! Immerse in delight – oneness with the water

Sun (fire): kissing but not scorching; loving – new life – burning away fear

Air: a great eagle, soaring, then grasping – feeling completely secure in her grip, I surrender to her – to the air – to her ability to hold me firm

In her nest near the summit of the mountain, I would be food for her chick! The 'new beginning' is not mine but its! I am just ...

Remembering Friends

We are sad to record the deaths of the following friends and members:



Robert (Rob) Waite: (1925-2018) sadly died on 18th October 2018, shortly before his 93rd birthday on 28th October. Rob will be remembered with affection by colleagues and members of the AHT who knew or worked with him in its earlier days.



Rob joined the AHRERC in 1990 after taking early retirement as an executive of a pharmaceutical company – to assist, he said in administration ‘for a short period’ – the ‘short period’ actually extending to 12 years! During this period, working two days a week, he gave loyal and dedicated service in many ways, including helping the Treasurer, Oliver Knowles, in keeping accurate records (his daughter, Lisa, remembers helping him ‘stuff envelopes’ for the bi-annual dispatch of *De Numine*). In August 1994, he took over from John Franklin as Hon. Membership Secretary of the AHS, leaving John free to attend to other Society matters. When, in August 2000, the AHRERC moved from Westminster College, Oxford to its new permanent home at the University of Wales Lampeter, he stayed on with Oliver looking after the membership in the Trust’s administrative office, then in Watlington, near his home in Chinnor, Oxford. Then, with the final closure of the office at Watlington, he handed over to Anne Watkins, who took over his duties at Lampeter, retiring for the last time at the end of June 2002.

Always a forthright and determined character, he remained so to the end. We learnt from Lisa that in September, having to move into a nursing home, Rob felt that this was not the way he wanted to end his days. Taken to hospital with pneumonia shortly afterwards, he decided he had had enough, and passed away peacefully, of heart failure, with Lisa and his son-in-law Paul at his side. A quiet and lovely end – our thoughts and condolences go out to the family.

The Revd Michael Crowther-Green (1936 –2018) died on 6th September just a day after his 82nd birthday. Michael was one of the earliest members of the Alister Hardy Society, joining in October 1988. Retiring as Oxford Diocesan Stewardship Adviser in 1992, a post he had held since 1983, he worked for Christian Aid, and had particular concern for the environment. We learn that he always took a keen interest in the work of the AHRERC and Society – and that, in the end, suffering from pancreatic cancer, and after five weeks in a hospice, he died peacefully with his family by his side. RIP.

Mr Peter W.H. Howe: we have learnt, belatedly that Peter died on 18th May 2018 from a heart attack at the age of 89. One of the earliest members, he joined the AHS in September 1987. He was always very interested in the work of the AHRERC and enjoyed the issues of *De Numine* as they arrived. He spent the last year of his life in a nursing home and, we understand, passed away peacefully shortly after a good meal and a chat with a favourite member of staff – a nice end to his life.

Mr Rodney Reeves – died at the end of last year. Joining the AHS in March 2014, he became an active and helpful member of the then AHS Midlands Group. He generously left the Alister Hardy Trust in his Will a bequest of his library of books, which however, the Trust, reluctantly, felt unable to accept. His gift, though, was much appreciated, and is recorded in a special tribute and extended obituary to Rodney by the Director of Communications, Marianne Rankin, below.

John Franklin

Rodney Reeves (1945 – 2018)

It was with sadness and after much deliberation that the AHT took the decision to refuse a most generous bequest of thousands of books left to us by Rodney Reeves on his death last year.

The books were an extraordinary and fascinating mix of literature, philosophy and above all the religions of the world. Unfortunately, the cost of collection and sorting plus their unsuitability for the library at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, meant that we had to take the decision to decline the collection. I went to Rodney's home and brought back several bags of books, which I will offer to members on 19th October at our Anniversary Celebration.

Some members will have known Rodney from the AHT Midlands Group led by Sheelah James, which was where I met him many years ago. Sheelah remembers that Rodney 'acted as a very able scribe taking notes at the meetings and sending these to me in his beautiful "copperplate" handwriting, so that I was well informed about what transpired during our meetings and could produce an account for *De Numine*; he also produced some very helpful scholarly notes on the subject matter for members prior to some of the meetings, and often introduced our sessions with accomplished musical meditations'.

Rodney was born in King's Norton, Birmingham, in July 1945, in the house he made his home all of his life. He went to school locally, and later to a teacher training college just down the road in Bournville. His working life was as a teacher of English and Music and 'everything', as he put it, in a number of Birmingham primary schools.

His friend Harry Houghton says that he got to know Rodney properly in the last third of his life, finding him to be kind, pleasant, generous and a really interesting person. He later came to realise that Rodney was quite an expert in Eastern Religions, who sometimes gave a talk at a Jain Ashram in Handsworth, where the audience would listen with total concentration.

On behalf of the AHT, I would like to send our condolences to all who knew Rodney and to express our gratitude for his generous bequest.

Marianne Rankin



Looking out to sea

The sometimes heaving motion of the waves
Reflects high passion, the savage beauty,
The restless current of our lives.
Roll down, you waves, crash down
And move us to surrender to that perpetual calling,
To trust, beyond the wild confusion
A hand that holds us through the deep.
You are the voice of that Divinity
That intersects the earth
Beyond the boundaries of our human limitation,
A resonance of that single power
That animates each tiny seed, and drives the Universe,
A signal of that grander presence
That freezes into time, and earthly motion.

Be calm, you waves, and grant us that tranquillity
Where life is sweet, and all things hold together.
Be calm, and lap upon the shores
Of all our pain and grief, and bring us peace,
Be calm, that we may know the light within,
The light that shines beyond the restless clouds
Of all our changing motions.
You waves, the countenance
Of all the shifting sands that blow upon our hearts,
Rouse now our sleeping lives to wakefulness.
You wild and awesome waves,
The ceaseless tide that softens stubborn rocks,
Wears down the jagged edges of our lives
Lead us now to wholeness.

You waves, you rise and fall, and swirl,
Reflecting hidden forces
That drive your separate story.
You are the echo of our greater self
That plays upon the ocean of the world.
Awaken us to see, deep down,
Beyond the complex of this earthly form,
The depth, where all things hold together,
The cradle of our lives, the nursery of myriad forms,
The energy unbound, the mystery of love.
Gather me now, into your single moment
That contains all time.
That moment which is the whisper of the gods,
The whisper of our inmost self
That fills the Universe.
Breathe on me now the breath,
The life of our eternity.

Jonathan Robinson



In a mythic time

Let us not forget
That we too walk in a mythical time
where fresh breezes from the East
come to awake the sleeper
and the clear ringing of a bell summons us to distant horizons
where wingèd horses wait in secret meadows
and golden apples, guarded by fierce dragons.

We too have our battles to face bravely,
and all the fearful phantoms that assault us.
We too must traverse the underworld
and somehow arrive back in the sunlit day
to live out our destiny, to fulfil our sacred task.

The hand of fate and the force of will collide
as we stumble toward meaning
half in blindness, half driven by inexplicable desire.
We sense a struggle of mythic proportions
behind our ordinary lives.

And sometimes in rare moments, we catch a glimpse
of a face in the mirror
a face from another time
chiselled from a living clay
imbued with beauty and inner light.
And we can feel the magic that lives in us.
We who are not mere mortals
but children of the gods
intimately known,
and of infinite worth.

Heather Johnson

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

I would like to make some comments and raise some questions regarding the article 'Sign – Voice and Four-leafed clover' in the Autumn Issue No. 65, that recounts some religious experiences and the firm conclusions the author draws from them.

In the midst of an experience (at home) of God's love she remembers a written account, read in a Ghanaian schoolroom years ago (when she was about 24), of a whole village being crucified by Germans in WW2. She swore at the time she could never believe in a good God that allowed such a thing to happen.

Having now remembered this previous vow, she asks God 'Well what about that village?', and I confess to being confused and troubled from this point on. The confusion arises partly because we seem to be back in 'the schoolroom', not in the sitting room at home. But more troubling than any confusion is the response she receives.

While looking at a picture that appears on the schoolroom wall (at home?) of wooded green countryside a voice (in the mind) says 'That happened there one afternoon in the whole of time', followed by a subsequent realisation that the goodness of nature and creation surrounding the village was being ignored. Paying undue attention to the atrocity displayed an unbalanced view of things. What was important to a balanced view was an appreciation of the trees and fields surrounding the scene of mass murder reflecting God's creation, and sustaining, of the goodness of nature.

Where does such a view lead us? In September 2018 a tsunami, following an earthquake, killed over 2,000 people in Palu, Indonesia. Photos of the area show its natural beauty (at least before the appalling damage). So am I to think it was 'just something that happened' one evening (around prayer time as it happens) 'in the fullness of time'? Instead of feeling horror at the suffering inflicted by this natural disaster should I not be paying attention to the natural beauty of the area for a 'balanced' view? I would find this extremely difficult. Clearly what happened was an event of nature. Earthquakes and tsunamis are part of nature as much as fields and trees (more so given human planting and cultivation). What implications does this have for the notion of the 'good' in nature 'sustained' by God? What implications are there for the nature of, and reasons for divine interventions when an intervention to find a four-leafed clover is as understandable as the *absence* of an intervention, when human suffering on a vast scale is occurring, not only as a result of human action but, crucially important in this context, the actions of 'nature'?

The article's author is left feeling 'all knowing' with no need to seek further for any answers and convinced nothing can add to what she has been taught. On the contrary, I feel it raises very important questions. Is such a comfortable cosy glow of certainty really what faith amounts to? Does a 'revelation' put an end to any doubt? What is the relationship between revelation and faith? If a religious experience 'teaches' something, is this knowledge only for the individual involved or is it meant for everyone? What does such an experience suggest regarding the notion of a 'sustaining' deity in respect to the natural world? I am not questioning the actual experience of the author, but she clearly decided to publish her account and what it 'taught' her. I wonder if I am alone in being troubled by the teaching that is identified in this example of religious experience?

Rob Abrahamsen

BOOK REVIEWS

Rupert Sheldrake, *Science and Spiritual Practices*.

London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2017. 247 pp. ISBN 9781473630079. £20.

Rupert Sheldrake, *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work*.

London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2019. 328 pp. ISBN 9781473653436. £20.

Dr Rupert Sheldrake, like Sir Alister Hardy, is an eminent biologist who accepts the spiritual side of life as a reality. He gave the very first Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture in 198, and so I thought it fitting that he be invited to deliver the 50th Anniversary Lecture. We are delighted that he has accepted the invitation and look forward to hearing him speak on *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work: Science and Spiritual Practices*.

Meanwhile, we have two books on the subject to explore. In *Science and Spiritual Practices*, Sheldrake brings his scientific understanding to bear on seven familiar practices which are common to many religious traditions: meditation, gratitude, connecting with nature, relating to plants, rituals, singing and chanting, pilgrimage and holy places. All have been shown to benefit practitioners. He has written the book because he believes that 'in our secular age there is a great need to rediscover these practices, whatever one's religion or non-religion'. Practice does not involve beliefs and so is acceptable to people of any or no persuasion. The theme that unifies these various practices is that they lead to an awareness of a more-than-human consciousness; 'They lead us beyond the mundane to deeper kinds of connection.'

Sheldrake begins the book with his own story, highlighting his rejection of the accepted materialist paradigm as well as the perceived schism between science and religion, which also exercised Hardy. Sheldrake recounts his own journeys: travels to Europe, North America, India and the Far East, and his spiritual journey from a Christian upbringing through atheism to his discovery of Hinduism and the mystics, and writing his first book, *A New Science of Life*, in Bede Griffiths' ashram in Tamil Nadu.

Science and Spiritual Practices traces the loss of religious belief across much of the world, while explaining that nonetheless, '*spiritual experiences* are surprisingly common', citing NDEs as examples, also the research of our own Religious Experience Research Centre.

Each chapter contains the history of one of the practices listed above and a scientific assessment of its effects, giving an understanding of the origins of the seven practices, their links to religions and the benefits they offer. Sheldrake often tells of his own experiences and the book is highly enjoyable as well as instructive. Practical suggestions for the reader are given at the end of each chapter and it is this combination of theory and practice which makes the book so intriguing.

But what about people who do not engage in any kind of spiritual practice? Sheldrake considers alternative approaches to the spiritual realm in the sequel, *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work*. Here he explores seven ways in which people can go 'beyond normal, familiar, everyday states of consciousness' through sport, interaction with animals, fasting, drugs, prayer, festivals and good habits.

In the Introduction, various models of scientific enquiry are explained, and the development of psychological theory is traced, from behaviourism which disregarded subjective experience, through cognitive psychology to positive psychology, eventually opening up to studies of consciousness,

including near-death experiences (NDEs) and religious and spiritual experiences (RSEs). By investigating scientifically the effects of different ways of connecting to that which is beyond everyday consciousness, Sheldrake shows that science and spirituality can be complementary.

This book contains secular experiences, such as extreme sports, where people push themselves to their absolute limits and deliberately risk death. Why? The answer given by one participant was: in order to feel life fully, to ignore extraneous aspects and to focus on the essence. Further examples are given, of being 'in the zone' or 'in the flow' which also indicate the transcendent aspect of sport: through being completely present in the activity. Other secular practices which lead beyond the mundane are interactions with pets and other animals, which offer more ways to experience connection, and affection. Fasting can open awareness, as can drugs and psychedelic experiences. A more spiritual way to go beyond is through celebrating 'Holy Days and Festivals' and we are given a fascinating history of All Saints and All Souls commemorations. Sheldrake interprets the celebration of festivals as activating 'a kind of collective memory' which 'connects present-day participants with their ancestors and predecessors over many generations'.

In this wide-ranging work, Sheldrake addresses the danger of selfishness in spiritual practice and traces the evolution of altruism. He discusses consciousness and the hard problem of how it can arise from matter, i.e. the brain. He explains how Aquinas considered everything in nature to have a soul, a view discarded by materialists but reinstated as souls became 'fields' for scientists. Sheldrake's theory of morphic resonance explains how 'fields are shaped by an inherent memory' which underlies 'the formation of molecules, crystals, living organisms, solar systems and galaxies ... and the activity of human and animal minds'. For him, God is in nature and nature is in God; God is both immanent and transcendent. He draws illuminating parallels in the understanding of the ground of all being between the Christian concept of the Trinity and the Hindu understanding of *sat-chit-ananda* – being, consciousness and bliss. This is an all-embracing presentation of religion, spirituality and science.

Both books are beautifully bound hardbacks, delightful to read, and Rupert Sheldrake asks and answers the questions so many of us have about spiritual experience. This year's Annual Lecture promises to be fascinating. Don't miss it. (See events page 83)

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin

Rupert Sheldrake, *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work*.

London: Coronet, 2019. 328 pp. ISBN 978-1473653436. £20.

Rupert Sheldrake's new book, with a sub title *Spiritual Practices in a Scientific Age* is a worthy sequel to his previous book *Science and Spiritual Practices*. Rupert has an extremely wide knowledge and experience of different forms of spirituality and religious traditions, which means that he can sit easily with both eastern and western traditions. This book looks at different forms of spiritual practice, both within and outside religious frameworks, with chapters ranging from the spiritual dimension of sport to learning from animals, fasting, psychedelics and prayer.

I found the book hugely interesting and full of fascinating information. It seeks to strike a balance between rational science and spiritual knowledge and insight. He is 'a strong believer in the scientific method and empirical enquiry' (p.1). His ability to research and justify his theories and conclusions

regarding the validity and benefits (or otherwise) of different spiritual practices is impressive. He also describes himself as an explorer, and I believe that many of his areas of interest will resonate with others who are pursuing similar fields of enquiry today. A theme running through the book concerns the nature of consciousness. He reacts against a materialist, reductionist approach and inclines towards a view that the universe is fundamentally conscious rather than unconscious. He explores the concept of fields of consciousness and his ideas of morphic resonance, although he does not refer to consciousness as 'non-local'

The importance of spiritual practice is 'to deepen our connections with the more-than-human realms of consciousness' (p.1). We can call this the higher or greater consciousness, or what we will; Sheldrake observes that 'all religions presuppose realms of consciousness beyond the human level'. (p.251) He is primarily concerned with our inner life, and indeed the inner life of all forms of life, insofar as we are able to ascribe an inner life to more primitive forms. This is the life of imagination, empathy, love, acceptance, belonging, and I was glad he also considers this within the context of animal life and emotions, which to me seems so important if we are to get a truer picture of the interconnectedness of all. However, the nature of this inner life is that it cannot be measured or objectively defined, so inevitably not everyone will agree with his methods of exploration or his conclusions. He sets himself against the materialist view that matter is the only reality. Spiritual phenomena are about 'more than' forms of consciousness, so do these phenomena indicate actual realities beyond the physical world? You will be hugely stimulated and encouraged by Rupert's thoughts and research.

The final chapter, 'Why do spiritual practices work?' is perhaps the most challenging part of the book, where he attempts to bring his observations and research into a cohesive framework. He observes 'all these practices have measurable effects' (p. 246) He wrestles with that dominant feature of Western thought that traditionally sees reality as made up of objective 'things' which are individual and separate from each other. This of course plays back to ancient Greek thought and Aristotle, where the soul is believed to inhabit and animate the physical body, a dualistic interpretation of reality where subject and object are seen as two separate and distinct realities. Sheldrake however agrees with Matthew Fox in preferring a non-dualistic rather than a dualistic understanding, a panentheistic theology rather than the 'God out there' theology that characterises the theistic religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. This is a perspective which sees 'God's immanence within nature – within the forms of all living beings, and within the wind, breath and sunlight – and within myself' (p. 267). So 'Our minds participate in the mind or knowing of Brahman, God, through knowing themselves.' (p. 253) Here we have a perspective which accommodates mystical experience. It is surely an area where the interests and resources of the AHT can make a significant contribution, especially when seeking to establish and confirm the spiritual dimension and reality of our existence.

I heartily recommend this book as a valuable contribution to fresh and pioneering thinking which takes us towards a better appreciation of ourselves and the world around us. It looks for a balance to the cul-de-sac of secular, materialist living and it seeks a more friendly approach to the environment – essential for the future life and well-being of us all. The book is well presented, with an index and a huge reference bibliography.

Reviewed by Jonathan Robinson

Steve Taylor, *Spiritual Science – why science needs spirituality to make sense of the world*

London: Watkins, 2018, (viii) 264 pp. ISBN 978-1786781581. £12.99

Let me say at the outset that there is much that I agree with in this book and I have no doubt that it will appeal to many readers of *De Numine*. Essentially Taylor's thesis is that that materialism is inadequate as a means of explaining or endeavouring to understand the world in which we live. A much more holistic methodology is required, and the essence of the book is to suggest that panspiritism offers the rounded universal approach that he sees as the way forward.

As any casual investigation will reveal, materialism can be defined in a number of ways and at the beginning of the book Taylor sets out his definition – the ten tenets of materialism. Amongst the ten are included, for example, human creatures are purely physical creatures or machines, all mental phenomena can be explained in terms of neurological activity with consciousness being generated by the brain and denying the possibility of any para-normal or psi phenomena because they contravene the fundamental laws of nature. These parameters set up a very reductionist approach to science which I suspect is only adopted by a percentage of scientists, but these are the parameters upon which Taylor bases his starting point. As he develops his thesis, he is very critical of the view that the hippocampus is the part of the brain in which memories are stored and highlights the confusion that often arises when trying to distinguish between brain and mind. I can see parallels here between the morphic resonance hypothesis of Rupert Sheldrake but although Taylor refers to Sheldrake in other contexts, he does not refer to morphic resonance.

The main bulk of the book endeavours to suggest that the mind acts through the brain rather as a type of spiritual awareness or panspiritism which eventually leads to his eleven tenets of panspiritism. These include the idea that rather than just being biological machines, human beings are, both mentally and physically, expressions of spirit or consciousness; this suggests that our physical bodies are an external expression of universal consciousness while our minds are an inner expression. Other tenets refer to the suggestion that human beings are not isolated entities but are interconnected through empathy, compassion and altruism, and we share the same essence as all things and are therefore one with all things. In the development of this train of thought, Taylor refers to the way in which indigenous populations over the millennia have related to spiritual phenomena. Via a discussion of near-death experiences (on which he consulted Dr Penny Sartori) and other psychic phenomena he comes into the world of modern physics, evoking quantum theory in support of his argument.

Strangely, Taylor makes few references to religion and assumes that many, like himself, will have been educated with a bias towards the materialist world-view. Maybe because I have had a very rigorous scientific training which emphasised the provisionality of knowledge, I find it difficult to accept his view that most scientists would fit into his definition of materialist. My main criticism is that the author does not seem to recognise this provisionality, which I believe applies to all knowledge, and that as we advance, we recognise the limitations of previous theories – not to reject them but to recognise the limits between which they are now recognised to apply. I think the book would be improved by a recognition of this provisionality and by a slightly less dogmatic approach – both to 'conventional' scientists and indeed in the stating of his own postulations.

Nevertheless, this book represents a fascinating exploration into his hypothesis that spirit or consciousness represents the fundamental basis of reality and I am happy to recommend it to all who approach spirituality with an open mind.

Reviewed by David Greenwood

**David M. Greenwood, *Art and Spiritual Experience: Exploring the Romantic Period*
Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2018. 246 pp. ISBN 978-085244-925-7 £14.99**

Some readers of *De Numine* may have attended Members' Day 2013, when David Greenwood gave a talk on 'Can the numinous be expressed through landscape painting?' which was followed by my presentation of 'Caspar David Friedrich, Landscape as Icon'. Since then our Treasurer has gained his doctorate, with research on which *Art and Spiritual Experience, Exploring the Romantic Period* is based.

There is always the risk, with transitions from PhD thesis to book, that the required plethora of references and theoretical underpinning required for the former might detract from the fluidity of the prose in the latter. However, David Greenwood writes clearly and manages to avoid losing the reader in the detail, although just occasionally the origin of the text is apparent. The research is meticulous and the exposition of the philosophical, and theological background to the Romantic period enhances our understanding and appreciation of the art of this period and its relation to the experience of the numinous. This is the heart of the work and constitutes its unique contribution to scholarship.

The structure of the book is clearly set out in the *Introduction*. Part I, Chapters 1-3 is the most theoretical section, encompassing the aesthetic and philosophical thinking of the period. Various theories of art are discussed and Greenwood's preference is for Michael Podro's criteria:

1. Art reveals through the skill of the artist some aspect of a subject that would not immediately be apparent.
2. The artist's depiction of an object makes reference to the perceptual process of the viewer, which enables an understanding to be achieved through, for example, the use of analogy.
3. The artist engages with the state of mind of the viewer to achieve an elevated or heightened emotional response to the work of art, which may suggest a transcendence that lies behind the objects depicted.

Part II, Chapters 4-8, explores the meaning and experience of the numinous, with reference to Friedrich Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto, and includes quotations taken from accounts in the RERC Archive. Greenwood then focuses on the two artists under consideration: in Britain, Samuel Palmer and in Germany, Caspar David Friedrich, in each case giving background and biographical information. The ways in which both artists express the transcendent is explained in detailed studies of their paintings. Palmer's aim was to show the glory of God's creation and he depicts Edenic scenes of the English landscape, often including biblical references. Both artists use strong contrast between light and dark and distant horizons, leading the viewer's gaze beyond the painting. This is particularly evident in Friedrich's use of the *Rückenfigur*, the back view of a figure, with whom we look at the painted scene and gaze beyond.

In Part III, Chapters 9-11, Greenwood widens the scope and moves on to practical theology, considering how works of art can aid devotion and meditation – art as sacrament. Altarpieces and landscape paintings are examined, in particular Friedrich's *The Cross in the Mountains*, also known as the *Tetschen Altarpiece*, a painting of a crucifix mounted high upon a rock, rising above dark fir trees and illuminated by the rays of the setting sun. This was the first time that landscape was used as the focus for an altarpiece rather than just as background and was highly controversial at the time. Friedrich also designed the wooden frame, depicting the symbols of the Eucharist and the eye of God; this was to enable the whole work of art 'to be used as the icons of the Middle Ages would have been used.'

Greenwood then traces the progression of depictions of the sacred from biblical themes to landscape, and on to abstract art, in a consideration of Dürer, Raphael, Rubens and Lorrain and ultimately to the present day and the colour field paintings of Mark Rothko.

As a lover of Caspar David Friedrich, I particularly like the cover, which shows one of his best-known works, the *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*. Sadly, this is the only illustration in the book. However, in this day and age, most readers will have an iPad or laptop to access the images that are invaluable in appreciating fully these analyses of the works of art. In this book, David Greenwood illuminates not just the art and philosophical and aesthetic background of the Romantic period but more importantly, he enables the reader to gain a full understanding of how art can lead us to a deeper experience of the numinous. It is this which leads me to recommend it to AHT members.

Reviewed by Marianne Rankin

Trevor Hamilton, *Arthur Balfour's Ghosts: An Edwardian Elite and the Riddle of the Cross-Correspondence Automatic Writings*

Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2017. 336 pp. ISBN 978-1-8454-0913-5 £14.95

The name of Arthur Balfour, who lived from 1848 to 1930, has come to public attention in recent decades in the context of the politics of the Middle East, with reference to his 'Declaration' in 1917. In that year, when serving as the British Foreign Secretary, he supported the efforts of those who were campaigning for the establishment of a Jewish state. Public memory has largely forgotten that he was Prime Minister from 1902 to 1905, perhaps because his premiership was not a particularly distinguished one. Also lost to popular recall is his work in the realms of philosophy. His published work included *A Defence of Philosophical Doubt* (1879), *The Foundations of Belief* (1895), and *Theism and Humanism* (1914). He came from a wealthy Scottish family and in addition to his premiership held many political appointments throughout his life. Possibly motivated by a personal experience of bereavement, Balfour was an active member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). In the company of others who sought to establish the continuity of human life beyond physical death, he sought to apply the rigours of philosophical and scientific thought to this question.

Trevor Hamilton's earlier book *Immortal Longings* (2009) is an excellent introduction to the early work of the SPR. In this book however, he devotes his considerable scholarship to a particular aspect of the phenomenon of automatic writing in the Spiritualist movement from the 19th century onwards. This is the matter of cross-correspondences and refers to the comparison of texts written by different psychic mediums; these claimed, or seemed to imply, that they originated from a common source in a post-mortem dimension. The book is a detailed record of the texts which were of interest to a socially elite group which included Balfour and some of his family and friends. These script were records of communications received over a period from 1901 to 1930. The communicators seemed to have three aims. To convince Balfour that Mary Lyttelton, a young women who had died at the age of 25, continued to love him in her post-mortem state; that the complexity of reference and symbols in the scripts would contradict the assertion that the telepathy associated with clairvoyance could explain the phenomena; and that efforts to influence moves for world peace were taking place in the 'spirit world'.

Hamilton addresses in depth questions that arise when examining this kind of material. Were the cross-correspondences unambiguous, consistent and meaningful? Did they demonstrate paranormal cognition? Might they not be the product of purely psychological factors? Were all the normal avenues for acquiring the information ruled out? Might not wishful thinking or over-subtle interpretation have led to the modification of the material? Were the aims, intentions, and long-term predictions of the communicators fulfilled? Hamilton's responses to these questions are summarised in the afterword to the book. He points out the difficulties in coming to any definite conclusion, except the fact that the complexity of the material suggests that to dismiss it as essentially preposterous and unworthy of study is illogical. He hopes that future researchers will take the work further.

Readers of *De Numine* may wish to reflect on the relationship between Psychical Research, Spiritualism (or Spiritism) and the study of Spirituality. They might from time to time be frustrated by references in the media which would seek to confuse the terms Spirituality and Spiritualism. A common theme which runs throughout the archives of the AHT is that of reassurance, hope and love, and the acceptance of the reality of a higher power. The experiences catalogued in this book seem to demonstrate a spirit of loss, uncertainty, and fear, and a continuing need for reassurance. Spirit continues to manifest itself in contemporary society, and the developments of science and technology, valuable as these are, do not seem to provide the avenue to peace and fulfilment, whether at the personal or social level. However your reviewer would wish to commend this book to a wider readership than those whose prime interest may be in the realm of psychical research. It gives us a vivid picture of how a group of sincere people who, despite being part of a class initially protected from many of the problems of their wider society by wealth and privilege, came to address both personal pains of loss in bereavement, and the implications of the wider social tensions that marked the first quarter of the last century.

Hamilton has unearthed an astonishingly rich assembly of sources, and provides an extensive bibliography. The book is a witness to painstaking research and will prove to be an invaluable source of reference. It also paints a picture of Arthur Balfour's inner life which has perhaps been overlooked, or minimised, by his biographers. Winston Churchill remarked cruelly of him 'If you wanted nothing done, Arthur Balfour was the best man for the task. There was no equal to him'. A *canard* which perhaps contains an element of truth, but we should not consign Balfour to political or social insignificance. His life illustrates the inherent tension that has existed through history as those called to public life struggle to integrate their inner spiritual convictions with the realities of the body politic.

Reviewed by Kevin Tingay.

Odoul, Michel (trans. Jack Cain), *What your aches and Pains are telling you: Cries of the Body, Messages from the Soul*

Vermont: Healing Arts Press, 2018. xi 194 pp. ISBN 978-1620556757 (pbk) \$16.95 U.S.

(Originally published in French in 2002 by Editions Albin Michel S.A., Paris under the title *Dis-moi où tu es malade, je te dirai pourquoi. Les cris du corps sont des messages de l'âme.*)

Michel Odoul is a shiatsu and psycho-energetic medicine practitioner with 20 years' experience, as well as being the founder of the French Institute of Shiatsu and Applied Physical Psychology. I was immediately drawn to this book because of my long-time interest in complementary healthcare and my conviction, through personal experience, that our 'aches and pains' have, indeed, something to tell

us if we can listen and understand. Rarely do we ask 'Why do I have this health problem? What is it telling me?' Our response is usually 'How do I get cured of it?' This book attempts to answer the first questions.

Other useful books dealing with the same subject, such as *Your body speaks your mind* by Debbie Shapiro, *The Healing Power of Illness* by Thorwald Dethlefsen and *D. Rudiger and Frontiers of Health* by Dr. Christine Page, approach health issues from various perspectives, for example thoughts and emotions, or just the chakras. In this book, Odoul focuses directly on Taoism and in Part 1 outlines in great detail the various energetic elements of that philosophy, such as the conscious and deep non-conscious, earlier Heaven and later Heaven, and in the physical body the relevance of laterality, the chakras and meridians and so on.

Odoul summarises his approach in his Introduction. 'In the first part I present the overarching, holistic philosophy that explains how everything is an interconnected whole. By knowing this we can better understand the reasons behind the 'choice' of a certain pain or illness, because we will be connecting the mind, the soul, and the conscious and nonconscious with the physical body that experiences pain'.

Part 1 A philosophy of Human Life: Energetic Connections inside and outside the Body. This is a detailed explanation of Taoist philosophy with illustrative diagrams set out in the following sections:

1. The Spiritual Dimensions of Human Life: Underpinnings of Our Being.
2. Between Heaven and Earth: The Human Being as a Microcosm of the Universe.
3. Connections within the Body: The Five Principles and the Twelve Organ Meridians.

Part 2 is a very comprehensive section covering most major illnesses and other health conditions. On lifting a book like this the instinctual response is usually to start reading Part 2 to get an answer to the 'Why' and the 'What' of our various aches and pains! However, in order to fully understand the basis for what may appear at times to be incomprehensible or even facile explanations for what an arthritic hip or a heart attack is telling one, it would be advisable to read first through all of Part 1.

Part 2 A Symbolic Message System: How the Nonconscious Speaks through the Body. This deals with the messages from the body:

4. The Main Parts of the Body: And How They Speak to Us
5. The Major Systems of the Body: The Symbolism of Our Organ Systems
6. The Sense Organs and Other Conditions of the Body: Feedback from the Inner Master.

In Part 2 Odoul gives many case histories from his own experience and professional practice. So, for example, when he says that problems with the hips 'show that we are moving through a situation where the basis of our deeply held beliefs is being brought into question.... and we are experiencing betrayal or abandonment' he gives a case history of a woman with hip problems and relates how, with help in accessing her conscious memory and her nonconscious, the connection became clear and healing was enabled. It showed that the truth that emerges in the search for meaning may be painful or unacceptable but may be the only path to true healing.

The Taoist way is to take responsibility for finding the meaning in one's life and Odoul compares the search for the meaning of our ill-health with our approach to interpreting the meaning of our dreams. Only the dreamer can say what they mean.

'No man can reveal to you anything other than that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge' (Kahlil Gibran)

There is no bibliography in this book but there are some suggestions for further reading on the same topic. There are quite a few excellent illustrations which explain Taoist thought. What I think would be helpful in this book might be a guided meditation with a relaxation exercise and a series of questions such as those in *Your Body speaks your Mind* (pp.41-43), e.g. what is the function of this part of the body? Describe the feeling? Does it remind you of anything? What does this illness mean to you? What do you think you have to learn? etc.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who wishes to move away from a mechanistic and dualistic approach to illness. Taoist philosophy provides a very sound foundation for exploring the meaning of our various aches and pains. It demands deep reflection and an honesty in listening to our bodies.

Odoul quotes a Chinese proverb which says 'The truths that we least want to hear are often those that we most need to know' and that applies to the search for the meaning of our pain and suffering.

Reviewed by Marian MacPolin

Bibliography:

Shapiro, Debbie, *Your Body speaks your Mind*, (1996 London: Piatkus Books)

Page, Christine, *Frontiers of Health*, (1992 Saffron Walden: C.W. Daniel Ltd.)

Dethlefsen, Thorwald and Dahlke Rudiger MD, *The Healing Power of Illness*, (1990 Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books Ltd.)

Alexander von Gontard, *Buddhist Understanding of Childhood Spirituality: The Buddha's Children* London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017. 270 pp. ISBN 978-1-78592-038-7 £16,68

Under this title I expected a rather different book at the outset, namely that this study was concerned with the outlook and approach which Buddhists themselves have on the spiritual dimension of childhood. It is however an *exploration* of our perception of children's spirituality, from the point of view and experience of a Jungian child psychologist within the framework of Buddhist teachings. Nonetheless it is a very interesting study, offering good basic insights into both Buddhist teachings and aspects of Jungian psychology along the way.

Alexander von Gontard is a paediatrician and child psychologist, whose psychotherapy is oriented along the lines of the Jungian school. He is Chair and Director of the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Saarland University Hospital in Hamburg, DE, and has written several books on spirituality and children as well as on Sandplay therapy. He has a strong leaning towards Buddhism, which he considers very compatible with the tenets of Jungian psychology, and offers a useful approach to the dimension of spirituality.

In this book v. Gontard endeavours to open up new perspectives on the spirituality of children and adolescents. The main themes of the study are introduced and defined in their general outlines in a basic and clear way, which is accessible to anyone versed in only one or even none of the fields of Buddhism, childhood spirituality and Jungian psychology. These fields are explored over several chapters in enough detail to allow for a good basic understanding of all of them.

Threading together and enlivening the more theoretical elements are a host of accounts of actual spiritual experiences and expressions of children and adolescents from v. Gontard's own cases, The book is also enhanced by quotes from non-academic authors, poetry and photographs, thus allowing for a multi-dimensional experience.

Three main parts form the basic structure of the monograph:

Part 1 Buddhism and Childhood;

Part 2 Spirituality and Children;

Part 3 The Buddha's Teachings and Childhood Spirituality

Each part consists of several chapters, themselves clearly structured into subheadings which in turn can also have separately titled paragraphs. This helps to access specific sub-themes and clarifies the complex contents. Personal expressions/experiences of children/adolescents are marked distinctly and differently from other quotes, enabling the reader to distinguish them at a glance. A wide-ranging list of references and a subject and an author index at the end offer good cross-referencing possibilities.

In the first part v. Gontard introduces the Buddha and his childhood from a biographical, historical and mythological perspective, as well as the reported instances of his interactions with children and/or teachings for or about them. There are not many of these, a fact that may at first sight be surprising, but makes sense in the context of the Buddhist understanding of life, as v. Gontard shows: to me this little section gives a better understanding of why there may not be such an intense concern with children's spirituality as a separate theme from that of adults for Buddhists themselves. A further aspect presented here is a look at childhood in ancient India as well as in modern Buddhist countries, including the theme of children as novices in Buddhist monasteries.

Part Two introduces the theme of spirituality in general, and also in the context of childhood. A short synopsis of Jungian psychology as it relates to spirituality is given with specific attention to the archetype of the 'Divine Child'. In the following chapters v. Gontard condenses a wealth of studies and literature about spirituality, especially in children and childhood. Referring to the acclaimed work of Hay and Nye (2006), he also introduces several more recent studies and authors, such as Lisa Miller's *The Spiritual Child* (2015). A wide variety of studies, not only on childhood spirituality but also on the connected theme of childhood religiosity are carefully drawn together. Religiosity is a main factor in the formation of the individual's spirituality and can be a greatly positive, but also very negative influence, and v. Gontard explores both fully. The various manifestations of children's spirituality are then considered in more depth under subheadings such as 'wonder & awe', 'wisdom', 'seeing the invisible' etc.

A subsection of this chapter deals with what the author terms 'negative spirituality' – an important aspect of the study of spirituality. However in my view it is slightly misleading in its terminology, as it is concerned with the feelings and behaviours resulting from a negation, misapplication and/or suppression of inborn spiritual dimensions by socialisation or education, rather than an actual negative element within spirituality itself.

In Part Three v. Gontard executes the synthesis of the two main topics. In correlation with teachings of the Buddha, such as The Eight Worldly Conditions, Five Hindrances to Spirituality, Three Aspects of Existence, The Four Noble Truths, The Middle Way and the Eightfold Path, he gives examples from children's innate access to the spiritual dimension, taken from the wealth of his own cases. It is interesting to see how the experiences and expressions of their spiritual search and development are aligned with the themes of Buddhist teachings even though none – except for a single child – are raised as Buddhists. Several of the children had already been introduced to us at other points in the book, and their insights are now expanded on in relation to a specific Buddhist teaching. The fact that so many aspects of childhood spirituality can be matched to Buddhism shows just how well these aspects of human spiritual life are understood in Buddhism. Von Gontard demonstrates succinctly how an approach to children's spirituality, taken through Buddhist teachings against a backdrop of Jungian

psychology, can open up a new understanding of this important field. It is certainly a worthwhile study, which – as he says himself – is an ‘active exploration [which] does not end, but always finds new and interesting questions’ (p. 251).

I can recommend this book as an introduction to the theme of children’s spirituality, as a way to gain a basic understanding of Buddhism and as a preview of Jungian psychology. It condenses a wealth of theoretical background, yet the text remains readable and enjoyable throughout. Students in the field of spiritual experience will find many references and indications for further study, while gaining an overview of much work in the specific field of childhood spirituality.

Reviewed by Karen Wiggins

Reference:

Hay, D. & Nye, R. *The Spirit of the Child*, London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006

Books Received for Review

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

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

Please send reviews to the Editor: theotokos66@gmail.com copied to denumine@gmail.com

Review copies which we supply will be yours on receipt of your review.

| | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Alessandra Belloni | <i>Healing Journeys with the Black Madonna</i> | Bear & Company 2019 |
| Selene Calloni Williams | <i>The Mother Mantra: The Ancient Shamanic Yoga of Non-Duality</i> | Inner Traditions 2019 |
| Henry Corbin | <i>Jung, Buddhism, and the Incarnation of Sophia</i> | Inner Traditions 2019 |
| Justine Afra Huxley | <i>Generation Y, Spirituality and Social Change: Young people are doing faith differently</i> | Jessica Kingsley 2019 |
| Julie J Morley | <i>Future Sacred: The Connected Creativity of Nature</i> | Park Street Press 2019 |
| Ashley Cocksworth, | <i>Prayer: A Guide for the Perplexed</i> | Bloomsbury, 2018 |
| Marcus Braybrooke | <i>Faiths Together for the Future</i> | Braybrooke Press 2018 |
| Stephen Hance | <i>Forgiveness in Practice</i> | Jessica Kingsley 2018 |
| Claude Lecouteux | <i>The Hidden History of Elves & Dwarves</i> | Inner Traditions 2018 |
| Pia Matthews | <i>Ethical Questions in Healthcare Chaplaincy: Learning to Make Informed Decisions</i> | Jessica Kingsley, 2018 |

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|--|---|-------------------------------|
| Elizabeth Mills | <i>In The Stillness: poems, prayers, Reflections</i> | Inner Light 2018 |
| Michel Odoul | <i>What Your Aches and Pains Are Telling You: Cries of the Body, Messages from the Soul</i> | Healing Arts Press (2002)2018 |
| Raimon Panikkar | <i>Cultures and Religions in Dialogue Part Two: Intercultural & Interreligious Dialogue (Opera Omnia volume 6 Part 2)</i> | Orbis 2018 |
| Ben Ryan (ed) | <i>Fortress Britain?: Ethical Approaches to Immigration Policy for a Post-Brexit Britain</i> | Jessica Kingsley 2018 |
| Lavanya Vemsani (ed) | <i>Modern Hinduism in Text and Context</i> | Bloomsbury 2018 |
| James Walters | <i>Loving your neighbour in an age of religious conflict</i> | Jessica Kingsley 2018 |
| H. W. Bateman & B. I. Simpson (eds) | <i>Understanding the Gospels: A Guide for Preaching and Teaching</i> | Kregel Academic 2017 |
| Andrew T. Le Peau | <i>Mark: Through Old Testament Eyes</i> | Kregel Academic 2017 |



AHT and UWTSd Lampeter Events, 2019

Monday 1st – Wednesday 3rd July 2019

Religious Experience Research Centre 50th Anniversary Conference 2019

The Future of the Study of Religious and Spiritual Experience

The conference will look back at the work of the research centre during the past five decades and also look forward to the future, with keynote lectures from Professor Ann Taves (University of California, Santa Barbara, former President of the American Academy of Religion), Professor Jeremy Carrette (University of Kent) and Professor Leslie Francis (University of Warwick), Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust Board of Trustees.

Venue: University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter

Details: Professor Bettina Schmidt. b.schmidt@uwtsd.ac.uk

Wednesday 3rd July 2019

10 am – 4.45 pm

University of Wales Trinity Saint David Harmony Institute with Tenemos Academy: *The Learning of the Imagination: Wisdom Traditions and Sacred Vision*

Venue: Founders Library, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter

Free entry – sponsored by the Temenos Academy and the Harmony Institute; lunch provided.

Contact: Nick Campion n.campion@uwtsd.ac.uk

Thursday 4th – Friday 5th July

The Centre for Interfaith Studies at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Theme: *Practising what is Preached: Practices of Justice in a Multi-faith Context.*

Religious and spiritual commitments often drive human beings to engage in social action, promote justice, to be politically engaged, and to care for animals and the environment.

In what ways do faith communities seek to work together on matters of common interest?

For further information see: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/interfaith-conference/>

Saturday 19th October 2019

10.30am – 4.30pm

Members Day: The Alister Hardy Trust 50th Anniversary Celebration of the establishment of the Religious Experience Research Unit by Sir Alister Hardy

10.30 am Registration and Welcome at 11.00 am

11.15 am 2019 Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture by Dr Rupert Sheldrake: *Ways to Go Beyond and Why They Work: Science and Spiritual Practices*

1.00 pm Lunch bring your own lunch, buy sandwiches nearby or enjoy local venues (tea/coffee provided)

2.00 pm Lecture by Dr Mark Fox: *Researching in the RERC Archive*

2.45 pm *Memories of Sir Alister Hardy* from family, friends and those inspired by his work

4.00 pm Celebratory Reception

4.30 pm Close

Venue: Oxford Quaker Meeting House, 43 St Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LW
(Tel: 01865 557373 Email: office@oxfordquakers.org)

Cost: £25; AHT members £20; students £5

Further information from Marianne Rankin:

marianne.rankin@studyspiritualexperiences.org Tel: 07714 032643

AHT South-east Wales Group:

Tuesday 7th May

Outing to Dewstow Gardens

11.30 am meet at the Gardens (location/directions can be found online)

Thursday 20th June

Theme: Navigating through Science and Beyond

Venue: see contact details below

Friday 4th to Sunday 6th October

Llantarnam Abbey Weekend Gathering.

Discovering Connections

Themes:

Connections between Jung and Pauli

Building Bridges between consciousnesses

Beyond Boundaries

Also Poetry and Art workshops

Theme: Oceans; Rivers; Navigating – Stepping stones or Minefields

For further information on SEW group events please contact Mary Cook: maryfrechfa@yahoo.co.uk

Other Events

Friday 14th – Saturday 15th June 2019

The Tavener Centre for Music and Spirituality: International Symposium on *Music, Spirituality, Wellbeing and Theology*

Patron: Reverend Richard Coles

In association with the Spirituality and Music Education Conference

Keynotes presented by Revd Richard Coles; Professor Liora Bresler

The Symposium aims to examine the place of music in this complex world, especially its role in wellbeing, through the insights of musicologists, composers, listeners, teachers, therapists and performers. How might your own lived experience of Sir John Tavener's music, for example, inform this dialogue?

Venue: Winchester Cathedral

Booking: www.Winchester.ac.uk/tavenersymposium2019

Further information: Holly.Pye@Winchester.ac.uk

Tuesday 2nd – Friday 5th July 2019

10 am – 1.15 pm

Narberth Baptist Fellowship: Biblical Summer School *Thy Kingdom Come*

Exploring the Jewish roots of Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God

Speaker: Rev David Pileggi, Rector of Christ Church in the Old City Jerusalem

Light refreshments available from 9.30 am onwards

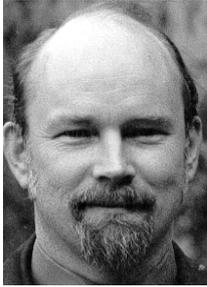
Venue: Plas Hyfryd Hotel, Narberth

Free entry; donations welcome.

Admission by booking form from m.s.williams@mypostoffice.co.uk or phone/text 07983 835 365



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS, Pages 15 – 51



Dr David Hay, 1935 – 2014

Director of RERC, 1985-1989; Trustee to 1985

David Hay was an early member, and later Honorary Life member, of the Alister Hardy Society. His interest in the work of the AHRERC and Society continued throughout his life.

He was appointed Reader in Spiritual Education at Nottingham University, where he carried out extensive research into religious experience, and Visiting Professor in the Institute for the Study of Religion at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland.

'David's research ... showed that religious experience was characteristically associated with high levels of ... psychological stability, hence it was empirically false to treat it as some kind of pathology' (Paul Badham)

Publications:

Exploring Inner Space: Scientists and Religious Experience (Penguin 1982); *Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts*, (Mowbray 1st edition 1990); *The Spirit of the Child*, with Rebecca Nye, (JKP rev. ed. 2006); and *Something There: the Biology of the Human Spirit* (2006, 2007, (Darton, Longman and Todd). His last book was a definitive biography of Sir Alister Hardy, *God's Biologist: A Life of Alister Hardy* (2011, Darton, Longman and Todd).

Professor Jeff Astley

Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience;

Annual Alister Hardy Lecturer 2016: 'Taming the Spirit: Religion versus religious experience', published in the RERC online journal volume no.1, 2018.

University of Durham: Honorary Lecturer since 1981; Honorary Professorial Fellow in Practical Theology and Christian Education since 1997; Honorary Professor in the Department of Theology and Religion since 2012. PhD in the philosophy of religion 1979. Trained for ordination at Queen's College, Birmingham, ordained in the Church of England 1970. For 32 years the Director of the ecumenical and independent North of England Institute for Christian Education (NEICE)



Publications:

Studying God: Doing Theology (Learning Church) (SCM press 2014); *SCM Study guide: Christian Doctrine* (2013); *Problems in Theology: Evil* Jeff Astley et al. (Continuum, T&T Publishing 2003); *Christology: Key Readings in Christian Thought* Jeff Astley et al. (SPCK 2009) *Christian Perspectives on Faith Development: A Reader* eds. Jeff Astley and Leslie J Francis, (English edition, Eerdmans Publishing 1992); *The Philosophy of Christian Religious Education* (Religious Education Press 1994); *Exploring God-Talk: Using Language in Religion*, Exploring Faith – Theology for Life (Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd; UK ed. 2004)

Professor Leslie J. Francis
Chair of Trustees, Alister Hardy Trust

Leslie J. Francis is Professor of Religions and Education within the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU); Canon Theologian at the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Newfoundland; and Honorary Distinguished Canon at Manchester Cathedral, England. Since October 2012 he has been Director of WRERU, since the retirement of Professor Robert Jackson from full-time work at Warwick. He gained his PhD from the University of Cambridge in 1976. His published works have been recognised by three higher doctorates: ScD from Cambridge in 1997, DD from Oxford in 2001 and DLitt from the University of Wales, Bangor in 2007



Revd Dr Marcus Braybrooke,
Joint President of the World Congress of Faiths

Annual Alister Hardy Lecture 2018: 'Meeting in the Cave of the Heart; The importance of religious experience to theology and interspirituality', to be published in the second volume of the RERC online Journal <http://rerc-journal.tsd.ac.uk/> in 2019

Revd. Dr. Braybrooke serves as Chairman of the World Congress of Faiths and Patron of the International Interfaith Centre at Oxford. He is a Co-Founder of the Three Faiths Forum and formerly served as Executive Director of the Council for Christians and Jews in Great Britain. In addition to his parish work, he has been involved as a leading organiser and scholar in interfaith work for over forty years. He was awarded a Lambeth Doctorate of Divinity by the Archbishop of Canterbury in recognition of his contribution to the development of inter-religious cooperation and understanding throughout the world.

Publications:

Pilgrimage of Hope; Faith and Interfaith in a Global Age (Crossroad 1992); *What We Can Learn from Islam* (O Books 2002); *What We Can Learn from Hinduism* (John Hunt 2002); *1,000 World Prayers* (O Books 2003); *Faiths Together for the Future: the story of the World Congress of Faiths* (Braybrooke Press, 2019)



Professor Dr Cafer Sadık Yaran

Faculty of Theology, University of Ondokuz Mayıs, Samsun, Turkey
Awarded PhD from University of Wales Lampeter
Director of Research in Turkey for the AHRERC Global Project. He lectured to the AHS on the result.

RERC DIRECTORS:

Peggy Morgan Director 1996-2003

Honorary President, British Association for the Study of Religions 2000-2003

Emeritus Fellow, Mansfield College, University of Oxford
Honorary President of the British Association for The Study of Religions 2015 -2018

Instituted the distance learning MA in Religious Experience, and supervised the transition of the RERC to Lampeter from Oxford.



Professor Paul Badham Director 2002 to 2010

Emeritus Professor of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Wales, Trinity St David

Director of the Global Project which researched religious experience in China, Taiwan, India and Turkey. Publication: Xinzhong Yao and Paul Badham *Religious Experience in Contemporary China* (University of Wales Press, Cardiff 2007)

Other Publications: *Making Sense of Death and Immortality* (SPCK 2013); *A John Hick Reader* (Wipf & Stock 2011); *Is there a Christian Case for Assisted Dying?* (SPCK 2009); *The Contemporary Challenge of Modernist Theology* (University of Wales Press 1998); *Facing Death* (University of Chicago Press 1996); *Death and Immortality in the Religions of the World*, with Linda Badham (Paragon House 1987); *Christian Beliefs about Life after Death* (MacMillan 1976)

Supporter of Inter-Faith Leaders for Dignity in Dying. Publication: *Is There A Christian Case for Assisted Dying? Making Sense of Death and Immortality* (SPCK 2009)

Studied theology, religious studies and the philosophy of religion at Oxford and Cambridge universities, and received his PhD from the University of Birmingham.

Dr Wendy Dossett (Co-)Director 2002-2010

Studied Pure land Buddhism in Japan for PhD

Lecturer in Religious Studies, TRIS, UWTSO Lampeter until 2010; then Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, University of Chester from 2010

Currently principle researcher on the 'Higher Power' project; published in 'Twelve Step Mutual Aid: Spirituality, Vulnerability and Recovery', Harvey, S. Steidinger, & J. Beckford (Eds.); *New Religious Movements and Counselling: Academic, Professional and Personal Perspectives* (Routledge, 2018).



Professor Bettina E. Schmidt

Current RERC Director



Annual Alister Hardy Lecture 2015: 'Sensing is believing? Spirit possession and other forms of Religious Experience in Brazil'

President of the British Association for Study of Religions (BASR) succeeding Peggy Morgan in 2018; Member of the Peer Review College of the Arts and Humanities Research Council; Member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the research centre 'Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society', University of Vienna; on the sub-panel for Theology and Religious Studies, Research Excellence Framework 2021.

Academic background is in Cultural Anthropology with a special focus on the anthropology of religion. PhD and a post-doc. degree at the University of Marburg, Germany. From 2004: lecturer in the Study of Religions at Oxford University, and then Bangor University, and currently at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Publications:

The Study of Religious Experience – Approaches and Methodologies (Equinox 2016) A collection of RERC lectures and seminars edited by Professor Schmidt; co-edited with Stephen Engler, *Handbook of Contemporary Brazilian Religions* (Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion, vol. 13) Den Hague: Brill, 2016; *Spirits and Trance in Brazil: Anthropology of Religious Experiences* (Bloomsbury 2016)

ARCHIVE RESEARCHERS:



Dr Verena Tschudin

Editor *De Numine* 1993 to 2004

Co-author with Beth Maxwell of *Seeing the Invisible: modern religious and other transcendent experiences*, Arkana 1990, copyright returned to AHRERC in 2005

Dr Natalie Tobert

Anthrologist who has travelled widely for research, and written on cultural appropriation.

Her research project in 2000 on mystical, spiritual and religious experiences, made extensive use of the archive, and was conducted and under the auspices of RERC who published a report in 2007. She explored the relationship between spiritual experience and mental health. Currently working with Professor Schmidt at the RERC, researching spirituality, health and healing

Publications: See her references on page 35 for details

Dr Mark Fox

AHT Trustee

Lecturer at the University of Birmingham's School of Continuing Studies developing courses on 'The Quest for Meaning', 'After Death, What?', and 'The Sacred and the Psychic'. He was thus established as one of a very small number of academic philosophers and theologians prepared to engage seriously with claims to religious, spiritual and psychic experience. Invited to give the 2012 Gwen Tate Memorial lecture to the Society for Psychical Research in recognition of his work



Publications:

Religion, Spirituality and the Near-Death Experience, (Routledge, 2002); *Spiritual Encounters with Unusual Light Phenomena: Lightforms* (University of Wales Press 2008); *The Fifth Love: Exploring Accounts of the Extraordinary* (2014); *Temple and Tomb: Fresh Light on John's Gospel* (2018)

Dr Fox has made extensive use of the archive in his research, pursuing one of Sir Alister's most significant aims: to identify a common core in religious and spiritual experiences. A significant aspect of Dr Fox's research is instances of light phenomena in the Archive accounts.

AHT AND AHS OFFICERS:

Marianne Rankin

AHT Director of Communications

Chair of AHS 2002-8

Chair Oxford and Cotswold group 1997 - 2007

Marianne has done sterling work liaising with other organisations, and educational outreach work with young people. She also runs retreats and organises AHT activities with Andy Burns. Together they comprise the Membership and Activities group (M.A.G.)



She is studying for a PhD on the subject of the fruits of religious experience.

Publications:

An introduction to Religious Experience (RERC Occasional paper, 3rd series 2005); *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* (Continuum 2008)



Revd Jonathan Robinson

Chair AHS 2008-12

A grant from the Alister Hardy Trust enabled Jonathan to conduct a pilot study into religious and spiritual experiences in the state of Tamilnadu in South India. The results are with the AHT archive at Lampeter, together with the personal spiritual experiences which he was able to record.

A frequent contributor to *De Numine* and participant in the Llantarnam Gatherings, where the group took part in his Grail liturgies, Jonathan found that the feedback from the small group in such a spiritually charged place as the Abbey helped him to explore his ideas for a 'wider vision' more fully.

Publications: *Grail Communion for Living Spiritually*, (Libertas Publishing 2018); *Wider Horizons: a Companion for the Journey*, (Libertas Publishing 2017); *Crossing Boundaries: Exploring Spirituality beyond religious institutions* (2014), *The grail Liturgies: An Alternative form of Eucharist for morning and evening prayer* (2010); *Give me the Wings: a book of poetry*, Libertas Publishing, 2017

Andy Burns

Trustee

Chair AHS 2012-15;

Current AHT Honorary Secretary and MAG committee member

Andy's professional photography skills have been invaluable in producing his presentation of Sir Alister's watercolours with his own photos taken 80 years later. He presented them first at Llantarnam and they can be seen on pages 49-51.



John Franklin

**Honorary Secretary, 1986-2015, London group organiser until 2015
Membership Secretary 1986 - 1994**

After 30 years' service as Honorary Secretary, his unassuming and meticulous work was sorely missed when he retired in 2015. As convener of the London group he instituted the recording meetings, and is also the definitive chronicler of RERU/RERC and AHS. His book is an invaluable reference work and has run to two editions: *Exploration into Spirit. A Power Greater Than... A History of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre and Society Origins, Development and Vision* (Lampeter RERC 2006) 2nd Edition 2014.

Marian MacPolin

Membership Secretary 2012-2017

West Wales local group organiser 2010–12. As well as taking on the daunting task of Membership Secretary, Marian re-organised the books for review in the RERC office, and was indispensable in assisting with the mail out of *De Numine*. When she moved back to Ireland, she was, and still is, sorely missed.

Mary Cook

Convener of the Local South East Wales Group

Co-organiser of the Llantarnam Gathering. Mary Cook is a frequent contributor to *De Numine*, not least with her comprehensive reports on the Llantarnam gatherings. The SEW Group is one of the few remaining, but goes from strength to strength.

Information for Contributors

Members are very much encouraged to submit items for publication. If you would like to send something for consideration, we would be grateful if you would observe the following guidelines.

Priority and time of publication are decided by the Editor, who retains the customary right to edit, if necessary, any material accepted for publication.

Copy deadlines: Spring issue: 31st January; Autumn issue: 31st July

Please submit contributions by email if possible (as an unformatted attachment) to the Editor:

theotokos66@gmail.com and copied to
denumine@gmail.com

Typed or handwritten manuscripts and letters should be submitted to
The Editor, De Numine, RERC, The Library, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED, UK.

Articles should be not more than 2,000 words long; **book reviews** up to 1,000 words; **local group reports** up to 750 words. **Letters**, accounts of personal experiences, poems, etc., are always welcome.

References should be numbered in the order in which they appear in the text. Please **do not insert endnotes**, but simply mark reference numbers in the text, and give a correspondingly numbered list of references after the text.

Please give the author, title, place of publication, publisher, date, and page numbers. Examples:

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1922. pp. 310 – 311.

Carlos S. Alvarado, 'The Concept of Survival of Bodily Death and the Development of Parapsychology', *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research*, No. 871, April 2003. p. 69.

Electronic references: please give the date when the reference was retrieved.

Alternatively, just give a list of publications you have referred to, at the end of your text, and suggested reading.

Book reviews: please also give the author, title, place of publication, publisher, date, number of pages, ISBN no. and price. Write or type as above, and send electronically if possible.

At the end of the text give your full name and contact address and details, any titles or affiliations, and e-mail address if applicable.

Review Copies: please send requests to the Editor: theotokos66@gmail.com

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The illustration on the front cover

is taken from the Megalithic Spirals in the Inner chamber of Newgrange, Stone C10.

Newgrange is an ancient site in the Boyne Valley, to the north of Dublin, Ireland.

Three lines form three double spirals, two of them an S-scroll, each centre connected to the other by one path and exiting to either side by the other. The S-scroll is enclosed by a line branching into a third spiral to the left to exit.