

***De Numine* Issue 76, Spring 2024**

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Please email contributions to the Editor
at
denumine@gmail.com
following the guidelines
on the back page



EDITORIAL

Spiritual communication and bridging divides

We did not give much notice of our theme for this issue, but still we received some rare gems to share with you. In an extraordinary tale of communication beyond the veil, Tim Chilton explains how he came to be the owner of a haunted house. Michael Shearer gives an unusual example of a numinous experience while viewing a public work of art in a London street. The amazing way that the spirit breaks through to communicate something of meaning, as a person with dementia nears death, is explored in Mark Fox's article, examining the work of Alexander Batthyány, and featuring examples from the Alister Hardy Archive.

As we did not have space for Ali Rabjohn's piece in our last issue, we are pleased to include it here. Ali provides welcome background to the theme of Working with our ancestors from last time (and you may want to consult the glossary we included in that issue). In contrast, Ken Vincent gives some light-hearted advice to his descendants and encourages us to do likewise. Kate Smart's contribution on the Japanese tea ceremony adds another international flavour to our mix. Many thanks to all for these thoughtful pieces, and for your book reviews, images and experiences.

We welcome your contributions to our next issue, which will highlight the topic of Spiritual Healing. Please send your items on this theme or on a different topic by the new deadline of 31 August, and note the guidelines on the back page.

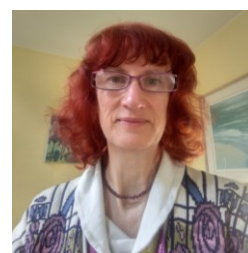
Thank you, Marianne

Since my first encounter with the Alister Hardy Society in 2006, Marianne Rankin has been a fount of wisdom and a great support. Marianne was so supportive when I took on the running of the Oxford & Cotswold Group after she stepped down, and has been the key player in organising the Members' Day year after year. She has brought heart, head and soul to the work of the Alister Hardy Society and Trust. Marianne's last report as Director of Communications is included in this issue. Many, many thanks, Marianne – you will be greatly missed.

Farewell to John and David

The great contributions of John Franklin and David Greenwood to the Alister Hardy Trust over many years are simply incalculable. One memory of the post-lockdown phase in 2020 for me was discovering three messages on our restored voicemail (our phonenumber had been broken for weeks), all from John, who was anxiously awaiting news of De Numine.

It was some weeks before I could bring myself to collate the heartfelt tributes to David and John for our obituary section in this issue. Godspeed, gentlemen, till we meet again.



Rhonda Riachi

ARTICLES

Engineering beyond the grave

I write this, as a long-standing AHT Member, about a time when my spiritual life felt as if it was at its purest. I've had about 21 (I keep a list) larger than life psychic events. These events seem to be clustered, and it's some time since I have felt such purity of spirit. Occasionally but seldom I can manifest specific tangible objects, i.e. buildings or vehicles, into reality. This is the account of the most life changing of them all, recounted here some 25 years later.

The mid 1990s was an intensely spiritual period with a strong active prayer life. The highs were high, but simultaneously my wife and I had an unbelievably hard time and the marriage was over. (We are back in a deeply loving relationship).

In 1999 I felt I needed a project to divert my energies and to refocus my pain. The project was to be a property, unmortgageable, bought for cash and in need of full renovation. I would do it all, but where? I anticipated the then cheaper parts of London but my parents (my father was a Qualified Civil Engineer) argued I should invest in what and where was special to me: the Staffordshire/ Derbyshire border. I spent over six months looking with some false starts, and attended many auctions.

The spiritual background was interesting. Three times in succession I heard the sermon "Faith is spelt RISK," the last in odd circumstances. The passage from the Gospel of John, "ask in my name" was felt so strongly but tempered by the Genesis passage of crossing the ford at Jabbok (a ford, a crossing place, a spiritual struggle, being blessed but at a price of permanent loss) also spoke to me. It was a spiritually potent time. I could feel change, gain but alongside that loss.

My parents had days out scouring Derbyshire cottages but needed guidance. My father and I wrote this specification:

"Detached, vernacular, stone built, between Ashbourne and Buxton but nearer Ashbourne, two plus bed rooms, south-facing garden,

workshop; my heart must lift when I see it, and it must have a point of special interest."

In March 1999 the Churches Fellowship had a meeting in Newark - one of the occasions that I heard the Faith-as-Risk sermon, and we, myself and a member of the CFPSS London meeting, D, stopped over at my parents on the way.

It was a remarkable magical evening. I had never seen my parents so relaxed. Their account was that when they saw D they thought she was an angel (remarkable language for two atheists). The following Friday, 19th March I phoned my parents. Dad wanted D's address to send a jointly written thank you for visiting (hosts thanking a guest!). They had written a joint letter in two parts, an effusive letter totally out of keeping with their characters.

After the call my father was insistent it had to be posted that night - it was after 10.30pm. Dad put on a cap, his coat, said goodbye to the parrot, and walked down his drive to the post box. He returned and dropped down dead.

Exactly a month later I was at mother's again with D. Mother had been persuaded to go out for the first time after the funeral and using my first property viewing as an excuse, I took her to Ashbourne. The viewing was odd and rushed, a token. Later that evening as I wrote my journal reflecting on the day the cottage became clearer in my mind. In spite of the rushed viewing it felt right and I decided to bid for it - the auction was the following day near Birmingham.

D and I went. The auction felt different to all the others and I had a sense of certainty. After registering, given the bidding paddle and deciding on my upper limit, we settled into the auction. The room had an odd sense of event, of happening, and the auctioneer, coming to my lot, said to the crowd "Now, what's special about this lot?" "Ghosts!" they responded. (Quick private amazement and thoughts. It felt fine to me, and D, a CFPSS member, confirmed this feeling. I had no idea of its history).

It was knocked down to me and I was asked to go into a side room, I assumed to sign for it - but no. A battery of lights, media, cameras and microphones greeted me. The first question was: "Mr Chilton, tell us why you have bought England's most haunted cottage?"

That is in itself an amazing story. But it's not this story. I was to find out that the first holiday my parents had together in 1948 was immediately below the cottage, that the cottage was exactly as described (see above) by my late father, and about six months beforehand my father and I had driven *en route* to Dovedale through Oakover park. I remember an intense prayer I made at that time - some people call them arrow prayers - praying I would LOVE to live here (the cottage is very close by) and at work at silly intense meetings I would practise visualising my dream spot, Milldale, property by property. Milldale is very close by.

Confirmation came quickly. An absolute stranger embraced me by the cottage saying "it's God's will that you are here" (not knowing either the ghost story or mine). My prayer partner had simultaneously booked a self-catering holiday immediately below the cottage, not knowing of my purchase and for about the first month I felt and received intense spiritual guidance from my father.

The media coverage was extensive and international. *The Times* launched its T2 supplement with the cottage as its cover story, the broadsheets now carried articles which had

previously only been in Tabloids or magazines (hence my being unaware) and Sky and Carlton TV both carried documentaries.

I do have a conclusion for this much condensed article finishes here. I had beforehand strong spiritual certainty of positive change and equally positive loss. My spiritual life was strong and quite pure. The property had a definite presence, a personality which for me was as positive as others had experienced as negative. I had a stream of affirming events.

Some made me smile. Shortly afterwards a group of Dowzers came – this was during the foot and mouth crisis when field work was difficult. They told me it sat on ley lines but there were definitely, they said, no human remains. That was in contrast to a psychic friend of my late father who asked to be left alone there. She reported a spot, unmarked, where Dad's presence was strong. She didn't know that was where his ashes were - missed by the dowzers. Then there were various manifestations with electrical items being specially affected, along with weeping interior walls.

The cottage was the last act my father helped me with - and achieved when he was dead.

Tim Chilton

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Spiritual Communication

Spiritual Communication is a difficult topic. There seem to be two major types. One is where something which appears to be outside of oneself triggers an experience which feels like a communication, and the second is where there is a linkage between people which is experienced as spiritual and is communicative.

The most frequent form of the experience of something out there which triggers a personal spiritual response is most often known as Nature Mysticism. We have all been much moved by some natural phenomenon; a stunning sunset or sunrise, the night sky brimming with stars, a fine tree or an exquisite flower, and so on. Often this presents as something more like a personal reaction than a communication; however, some of these experiences are stronger and deeper and some report a sense of opening and linkage which might qualify as communication, especially in very extensive scenes like the view from high in mountains or across the vast expanse of a polar scene. It can take some people beyond themselves, but still the question of the difference between a reaction and a communication remains.

Also, where the experience is between people there is a problem of how the understanding required for communication can occur. For two people to communicate some shared structures of interpretation and meaning must exist. We can't understand what is said in a foreign language. Similarly, we may interpret any gestures or visible behaviour of another as transmitting or sharing, but only if our own culture or being seems to function in a similar way. If we think cats purr only when contented or pleased, we will misunderstand the fact that cats purr loudly when they are badly injured.

Here I would like to bring in my own experience and history and the process of trying to understand. My Hindu and Buddhist friends tell me that what I have encountered and try to describe here is a form of what they call Darshan.

I have been regularly meditating for more than fifty years. At one point many years ago I encountered, during meditation, a part of my

own consciousness which manifestly was not part of me. I found this a decided shock, and suspected that this may be the first stage of some sort of mental illness or psychiatric disorder. However, this part of awareness, which wasn't me, wasn't scary or threatening or otherwise troubling, so not some embodiment of personal fear or anxiety or the like. On the contrary, it appeared personal without being a person, and was entirely benign. It didn't seem likely to be another self in the making as with multiple personality disorder, as there was no question of switching to this other self. So, I kept an eye on it. It just watched, it didn't communicate. I didn't hear voices or get instructions. So I called it The Watcher. I couldn't sense it all the time, it would just appear now and then.

With time I got used to it, nothing untoward occurred but I remained wary. Then I came across a comment in the scant writing of Bassui, a fourteenth century Zen master, of the need to find in the individual awareness itself what he called The Witness. The Watcher, the Witness, this seemed much the same thing. What a relief. An established authority in the field, respected and with a sound reputation, using such a similar concept. After that I came across many Buddhist Masters talking in similar terms advising the Seeker to allow and encourage the Witness, or the Watcher, to extend into personal consciousness as part of the process towards Enlightenment. Indeed, apparently there is an entire Yoga (with its meaning of a Way, a Practice) in Hinduism known as Hridaya Yoga, which means Witness Consciousness. The task within this path is to awaken Sakshi or the inner Witness, thus to reduce the ego, the separate individual awareness, and move towards spiritual wisdom.

Then came the Epiphany. In September 1983 I was walking down Paul Street, (appropriately enough) in Shoreditch, London, when I came across a sculpture up the side of a building on my left. It showed two massive, muscular men climbing up the side of the building, one above the other. The uppermost was looking up, but held one hand down to the one below, literally

giving him a hand. The lower climber stretched out one hand below towards passers-by to help them climb upwards. The symbolism was instant and real. I understood the sculpture in a non-verbal way; I just felt that here was an offer of help to rise above the limited level of myself. The effect was overwhelming. The Watcher flowed through me and swamped my little consciousness like a flood, in a fraction of a second. I was wiped out, totally transformed in a flicker. It rocked me and I grasped the railings nearby.



The world had been recreated. The distinction which we all unconsciously live by was abolished, where the self is cut off and separate, holed up within the body while there is an outside world we can perceive through the senses. There was no barrier between self and world, no separation, I was no longer imprisoned but free. It was all one. All around was part of a single consciousness, united, whole, and my little awareness was integrated with it. Look down and there is my arm, and in the same sense, look out there is my road, look up and there is my sky. All one.

Simultaneously, in the same fraction of a second, subjective time slowed dramatically. Here was a second of time, and there was vast knowledge in it with a realisation, oh and another and a dozen more, and what's this, another second has come along, also replete with insight and knowledge. Not that the traffic and walkers had slowed, but consciousness had almost stilled. The Watcher had moved in and it had no time, just Being. Literally eternal, outside time.

The entire context of this awareness which had taken over, was Pure Goodness (I would use the word Love, if it had not been so compromised by trivial overuse, by Romanticism and Sentimentality).

So I was ecstatic in the literal sense, outside myself in a joyous, blissful state. The words to describe this realm don't exist. After a while, the intensity faded enough to enable me to walk on, completely changed, for life.

The Hindu use of the term Darshan emphasises this sort of opening as triggered by a work of art, usually a religious icon or sacred building. I have had lesser versions of this experience; once walking into the indigo light of Chartres Cathedral, and being suddenly overwhelmed, and I once found that I couldn't stand but just sat and cried before Leonardo's 'Annunciation' in Florence. The art breaks through and delivers its liberating meaning.

Such experience seeps through our ego-boundaries and enables communication not by sharing similar structures of meaning, but by becoming what is encountered. With most forms of Knowing we model or symbolise what is to be Known. With the Watcher, we become what is to be Known. So this knowledge is pre-verbal and the problem of recipients with different languages doesn't arise.

There is a second feature of Darshan which is in Hinduism, but is more strongly present in Buddhism. Here a person who is appropriately open may convey the experience to another. It isn't put into any linguistic or visual medium. The Sage can simply pass it on to appropriately available and ready followers. I cannot do that. However, I have had this form of Darshan

spontaneously happen. I can't initiate it. When it occurs I am not expecting it or trying to bring it about. It just happens. I don't have to know the other person involved. It has happened in crowds. It has nothing to do with attraction, sexual or romantic, or any other kind.



Here's what has occurred. Every now and then, unpredictably, my eyes are caught by another person's eyes. There is a very distinctive sensation of the Watcher flowing into me, not in the great overwhelming manner, but enough to announce the presence. This energy flows out of my eyes and into the eyes of the other person and we are both caught. Movement is tricky, we are held in the beam. Speaking is very hard, usually the other person can't speak at all. With

great effort, I can manage just short words of one syllable, like: "This is a Good thing. A great gift. Let it flow. Just let it be. Don't be scared" - that sort of thing.

The flow continues until I can see that the intensity is beginning to be too much for the other person. I put my hand over my eyes, move my head to one side, wait a few seconds and look back. The connection is broken. Subsequent talk, if any, is usually confused. If a stranger, they hurry away. There is no question of any sort of strange hypnotism or attempt to take over another; it is a gift received and passed on. That's all.

Let me emphasize that the problem of the means of communication doesn't apply here. We know the same way in which we know we are conscious, the Watcher communicates by its presence. Nothing else. It doesn't speak, so can communicate whatever the language of the receiver. No shared model is required. There is no conversation.

Furthermore, the presence can be felt on the parts of the self over which or into which it flows. Our ordinary everyday self is immersed in Pure Goodness. There is a direct awareness of the relation of this Goodness to the components of our own mind. The receiver can know which parts of its ordinary, every-day, separate consciousness are harmonious with the Watcher and which not. The parts which match the Watcher feel glorious, the parts which don't harmonise feel totally wrong, or if seriously disharmonious, like patches of your own self burning. You know where to put your effort to try to make changes.

This is communication by giving direct knowledge of where we ought to be, and how to continue the path of going Home.

Michael Shearer

The valley of my ancestors

Connecting creatively with the ancestors and the Q'ero Tradition

In many traditions, the world was sung into being: Aboriginal Australians believe their ancestors did so. In Hindu and Buddhist thought, Om was the seed syllable that created the world. - Jay Griffiths

When I gaze up into the night sky and appreciate the vastness of the universe, I am reminded of how much the Inca knew about astronomy during our early evolution as humans*. In the Andean Cosmo-vision, the Inca believed that the first masculine and feminine Inca originally came from the Pleiades to the earth, to Mama Ochio the ocean. They carried masculine and feminine energies along the rainbow path and down to earth. The Pleiades constellation, (the koto kuna) connect us to many generations of Grandmothers leading back to the essence of the Ñ'usta lineage. They also say that we all have a guiding star connected to our ancestors and the place of our birth (some Andeans call this their Paqarina) supporting us through life.

We can connect to our collective or personal ancestors by journeying to the upper worlds, to a place in the stars where they all gather and offer a deep well of support. When I visit this place with intention, I'm always warmly welcomed and encouraged to develop my talents and skills. I can communicate more easily with them at times of the year when the veils are thinner. Samhain or Halloween is traditionally the time of year when we would have brought into balance any ancestral issues and honoured them on a personal and collective level.

If we do not heal our ancestors, they continue to live through us and until they find peace, we do not find peace. Ancestral healing runs deep through our bones and our DNA. Being in connection with my ancestral line brought me deep happiness, self-esteem, and a reason to walk and explore my personal path further. This work has been instrumental in helping me to understand the coping mechanisms and patterns of behaviour that were passed down to me, through my male or female lines.

There is a difference between our collective ancestors and our personal ancestors. Some of our collective ancestors, in my experience roam the land where we currently live. They continue working on the land, as they would have done, many years ago. They like to be honoured with despachos and Haywariquis, with tobacco, cornmeal, and ultimately - with prayers and intent. A place can be greatly affected by those who lived before us and these ancestors can help when we need to perform a house clearing, or work energetically with the land, bringing an issue into balance. They come forward with information about what might be causing the stagnant energy and are often open to receiving healing themselves. Helping our collective ancestors pass towards the light is called Psychopomp work, and this can be for spirits who still think that they are alive on earth and are seeking healing from us.



Star Beings 201 by Ali Rabjohns. Felted Textiles, 75 x 150cm, Materials: Wet felted merino fleece, Swarovski crystals and muslin.

The ancestors can also talk to us during our dreams and meditations. We use breath work, meditation and ceremony to help us release any

toxicity or heaviness from these issues. They may need a fire ceremony to help release and transmute the energy. Each tool is used to highlight and support our natural rhythms. These rhythms may feel faintly familiar, like we are finally 'coming home'. They hold the connection to our ancestors, to our lineage and help us to ground and walk softly on the earth again with beauty. Mama Cocha the ocean and Pachamama are incredibly soothing and grounding nature beings to sit with. The trees in particular can help us to heal our male and female lines.

Our loved ones who have passed over also appreciate a gift from the soul that has touched us deeply. This could be a poem, a piece of writing, a song, or artwork created from the heart.

My teacher Pampamesayoq Don Agustin, says that to allow the heaviness from our ancestors to be returned to the earth, we need to ask Hatun Amaru (great serpent) to open his mouth and eat our ancestral *hucha* (heavy energy) for us. He believes that once our ancestors have passed over the rainbow bridge to the underworld, they need our healing light to help them, as they can no longer heal themselves. Any Sami (our sweetest, finest vibration of energy that we offer) is most welcome.

On a deeper level, when we journey to the underworld, we can find the roots of the traps and the toxic shame or *hucha* that caused the original wounding in our ancestral history. When we can clear these through shamanic or energy work, we clear generations of suffering and pain.

The Altar

Altar Work is an essential tool to help keep us in 'Ayni' with the world, which is the Quechuan word for right relationship. An altar helps us to come back into balance with ourselves and to reach that deep point of stillness, acting as a bridge between the worlds.

I think of my altar as a two-way channel of communication and consider what I could do to open up that communication with spirit even further. Creating an altar helps any ancestral connection, but particularly the connection with my personal ancestors, as it acts like a direct line

to Spirit and allows a clear channel for both parties to communicate and heal. It's like saying to spirit "OK, I'm honouring you/my ancestors with this altar work, please give me advice on this issue and help me to work with it in the most efficient way for my highest good".



*Easter Altar in Hampe Nawasi Eco Lodge,
East Sussex, 2022*

This is how I realised that my ancestors' heavy feelings were not mine, as sometimes we take on their feelings. When I first started to train as a Paqo, my Birth Father (who had died when I was 5) was around me a lot. He died very young from emphysema, a disease affecting the lungs. His sadness and grief deeply affected me at the time, but as soon as I 'honoured' him on the altar and began a healing conversation, the heaviness slowly lifted and I realised just how much I had been carrying on his behalf.

Ancestral altars (outside, or inside) helped me to encourage my ancestors to no longer live through me. I spent time with them, speaking with them in turn, through the simple act of lighting a tea light, or placing a *khuya*/a stone on the altar. *Khuyas* are stones imbued with your love and compassion and can represent a connection with our ancestors.

Having an altar in our home or outside in the garden helps us to step outside of time and look at any issues in our life with perspective. It helps us to step outside of the 'drama' or story we may be unwittingly creating and helps us to connect to our power animals, guides and ancestors for further assistance, which we sometimes can't hear in the day-to-day routine.

There are three simple steps to creating your Altar:

- Open sacred space
- Collect your materials
- Place in a constellation that's happy and satisfying to you.

Materials can connect to each of the elements: earth, fire, air and water. Use these elements or weather around you to inform your practice. Look at what you're being told by the wind and the sky. Notice what birds or animals come to visit. Listen to the whispers of the ancestors in the wind while you work.

My teacher Alberto states that the North is a good direction for honouring and developing a relationship with your lineage, your heritage, and your ancestors. The North is connected to air, communication, and timelessness. He said that it also helps to have a Northern area of the home for the ancestral photos to be placed. Having pictures of our ancestors helps them to feel honoured and keeps them out of mischief.

To us, the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground - Chief Seattle

Goddess of our ancestors

More recently I have been working with the Ñ'usta's. The Ñusta is the feminine energy of the Apus (the mountain spirits) which holds both a feminine and a masculine energy to obtain balance. Ñusta is the Quechua name for a goddess/princess, a woman of royal blood as in the Incan empire. In my tradition Mama Simona is the Goddess of our ancestors - she is connected with the throat chakra. She is the female protectress of Cusco, holding everything in perfect balance. Mama Simona holds the connection to our ancestral feminine lineage as well as connecting us to our roots from our previous life. She supports us into finding or feeling more like ourselves and creating a safe and happy life.

Inter-generational healing

Clients often come to me, knowing that they are carrying the heaviness of generations on their shoulders. This heaviness has usually made them physically ill in some form or another. What is

surprising for them is to find out that they are in fact often the catalyst for the inter-generational healing of their whole family. This takes real courage, as in my experience, it's not just about the healing, it also requires firm boundary setting with other family members and non-violent communication.

I frequently tell my clients that it is OK to push back and reclaim the space they need to heal within a complex and toxic, dysfunctional family dynamic. Women in particular are conditioned so much to believe that their role within the family dynamic is the selfless caregiver.

The healing process can also involve 'stepping into', or embodying an ancestor's energy for a short facilitated time in order to understand it better and be more compassionate about a particular ancestor's journey. These patterns of behaviour are handed down to us through generations upon generations. Patterns like people pleasing, giving power away, alcohol, drugs, secrets, taboo, financial blocks, illness, premature death and adoption. All these themes are played out time and time again in different scenarios and stories until they can be healed by someone who 'sees' it for what it truly is or looks at it in a different light, through the lens of compassion and also through the four archetypes: serpent, jaguar, hummingbird or eagle.

It takes time to bring everything into balance with Ancestral work. It's not a straight path: it can be two steps forward and one back. However, with perseverance and a consistent approach, your load will lighten one day, and you will realise that you're feeling much better, and that your story has changed for good.

For all my relations - Ali Rabjohns

Ali Rabjohns has been initiated as a Fourth level healer in the Andean Mystical Tradition, with a lineage from the Q'ero nation in the High Andes. She is a Paqo, Anthroposophic Arts Counsellor (MBACP, Accred), and a Textile Artist. www.alirabjohns.com

*I want to mention 'The Secret of The Incas' by William Sullivan - as a great resource for astronomical knowledge of the Incas.

The Japanese tea ceremony

I've always been very drawn to Japan in particular Shinto and Buddhist religions. A few years ago I was lucky enough to go to Japan and I was invited to attend a traditional tea ceremony with a trained Maiko (an apprentice Geisha). The Japanese tea ceremony or 'The Way of Tea' (茶道) is described as a ritual between friends and family using matcha or powdered green tea (Camellia sinensis) accompanied by small, delicately decorated sweets or cakes.

These ceremonies can take hours and are held in small, specially constructed bamboo tea houses with tatami floors (also used in martial arts). There is no furniture save for a central hearth or burner that allows for the water to be heated and possibly a long low table where flowers are symbolically arranged (often asymmetrically) below a calligraphy hanging scroll. The room is designed with 'perfect' proportions and has a low ceiling, paper walls and usually an outside garden with gravel, stepping stones and small trees and shrubs. Nothing is out of place.



The ceremony is considered to be a transformative, spiritual practice and was originally devised by a Buddhist monk called Eichu (永忠) who brought tea back from China in the 9th century and performed this ritual for Emperor Saga, 52nd emperor of Japan. He

enjoyed this ceremony so much he ordered that the tea plant should be cultivated in the Kinki area of Japan and tea houses sprang up across the country. By this stage tea in China had been known for over a thousand years.

In Japan the powdered matcha tea has been used by Buddhist, and in particular, Zen monks for religious rituals ever since. In monasteries it began to be associated with initiation rites and healing practices and the use of matcha was codified in every detail. A practice called Wabi-Sabi (侘寂) which is a world view centred on the acceptance of transience and imperfection set out specific principles for monks and their training. Wabi-Sabi aims to develop and combine and develop a person's interior humility, restraint and sobriety while embracing the exterior world of physicality, imperfection, and decay. Through seemingly menial and mundane tasks, monks make progress towards satori or enlightenment via this path to achieve balance and harmony between the interior and exterior worlds. The tea ceremony demonstrates the personal qualities of humility, service and hospitality required of a monk.

As a participant in the ceremony everything appears symbolic. The hot water and powdered green tea is whipped together in flourishing strokes with a special bamboo whisk creating a frothy green liquid. The tiny tea bowls are hand thrown and are characterful with deliberate markings of the potters thumbs or patterned with simple but unique glazes. Each guest must purify their hands and face before the ceremony begins and the host is always last to arrive and welcomes each guest individually. Guests are invited to explore the room and study the beautiful flower arrangement, the hanging scroll and the views of the garden framed by the bamboo windows before the ceremony commences and we sit, shoeless, on the floor.

The aesthetic of the tea house is elegant verging on plain to western eyes. And the emphasis for guests is similar to a silent retreat where turning inward and personal reflection are expected rather than discussion and social engagement. Although the ceremony is silent there is

communication in expressive and exceptionally polite bows and hand gestures. It is important to make sure that your fellow guests have everything they need before sipping the tea or nibbling the cake yourself. Time passes slowly and the refreshments are little, edible works of art to be admired.

The Way of Tea is a fascinating ceremony epitomising Japanese attention to detail, our relationship to the seasons and nature as well as a strong desire for spiritual wholeness. The state of mindful awareness achieved while the ritual

progresses seems to heighten all senses and I remember my joy at the light and shade of leaves playing on the paper walls, my sense of smell as the tea is poured into a beautiful, green bowl and my open heart at the young Maiko's white face as she delicately offers me another, exquisite cake. I found it very calming and moving that even in the centre of a very busy city, the tranquillity of the room and serene actions of the hostess brought everyone home to themselves.

Kate Smart

Grandpa Ken's Guide to Life 2.0

I am 80 years old and in poor health, so what do I have to pass on to my kids and grand-kids?

One of my hobbies is genealogy. It's good to know where you came from. Except for the 6% of me that is Native American, virtually all my ancestors came from Britain and were in the American colonies before the American Revolution. There is an old saying that, "There is no one who is not descended from a king and no one who is not descended from a slave." One of my ancestors was the illegitimate child of James IV of Scotland; another was found to be an "undesirable" by the Lord Mayor London, and his punishment was to be sent to the Colonies for seven years of indentured servitude. Many think that indentured servants had it "easier" than slaves, but one-fourth of them died before their seven-year term was finished. There is also a "dark side" to my genealogy, and that is that one of my ancestors owned fifteen slaves. As someone who spent my 20's helping integrate

The single best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.

Go with the odds!

Everything has a price on it.

Follow your bliss (within reason).

Enjoy the life that God has given you, and make the world a better place.

the U.S. workforce via the Poverty Programs of the 1960's, this fact is extremely embarrassing!

Like virtually all readers of De Numine, I and other members of my family have had spiritually transformative experiences which we treasure and are an important part of our family history. I have had two mystical experiences, an ADC, dreamed the future several times, and two premonitions.

A few years ago, I decided to compile some of my "Words to Live By" which I called, "Grandpa Ken's Guide to Life." I gave the first version to my kids and grandkids, and to my joy, they occasionally quote it back to me! Like Omar Khayyam who wrote his quatrains over many years of his life, I have added new "wisdom" since my initial offering.

After you have read my "Guide to Life," think of writing your own for your descendants!

Practice the art of the genuine compliment.

Treat other people the way you want to be treated (Jesus + all major religions).

An explanation is NOT proof.

The part of the brain that asks a question about God is not the part of the brain that can receive the answer.

Show me your DATA!

Regarding comparative religion, the truth lies in the commonalities.

Part of being educated is --- when you don't know the answer --- knowing that no one else does either.

Spontaneity is the hardest thing to prepare for.

Theologians study dead mystics; religious/spiritual experience researchers study live mystics.

God is real, the Universe is here, and we are here; if there were no God, there would be no Universe and no us.

The many names for God in the world's religions are God dressed in one's culture.

People will do all sorts of things in the name of religion - fast, give up certain foods, give up alcohol, even give up sex - almost anything, but the thing that would really help: treat others the way you want to be treated.

The best thing that you can give your children is to love them! If you also want to make them smart --- read to them.

Love stands by your side, no matter what. Fear leaves at the first opportunity.

One good deed is worth a thousand prayers (Zoroaster).

The angels, saints, and jinn of the West are the "small g" gods of the East and of ancient times.

Satan may be a neon sign, but God is the light of the Universe.

*The keys to effective magic are
1) you have to be "in the club,"
2) either you or your priest has to know the "secret words."*

Miracles of one's religion are the "magic" of other people's religions.

God is Great; Religion not so much!

Theology is basically an argument about a book.

Over-prepare for your lectures and/or performances.

Life has more twists and turns than a San Antonio street.

It's not the drinking but the getting drunk that gets you into trouble.

Gambling is for suckers.

Whenever possible, have an "ace-in-the-hole." (a backup plan)

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. It's better to get rich slowly than to risk losing it all.

Be kind to everyone. Remember, many times, it's the "clerks" that decide major life events for you.

Although trite, "Please" and "Thank You" work wonders!

If you want to be a good person, seek out other good people and learn from them.

Know someone at least 6 months before marrying them.

Live well but simply! Life is too short to spend it taking care of a lot of "stuff" you don't use.

Tip fairly. Remember, these folks don't make much money, and you need to reward good service.

The more you have in common with your spouse (personality, likes, dis-likes, politics, age, race, class, religion, etc.), the happier you will be.

Always remember that you are just as good as other people. Even if you become rich or famous, you are not better than them.

There is a time and place for everything.

Be grateful to God and to all those people who have helped you along the way, and "pay it forward."

When someone who stands to make money from you advises you to do something cheaper, listen to them.

Selfishness is making other people do what you want them to do.

Spoiled is OK; selfish is not OK.

A bribe is what you get for doing something bad. A reward is what you get for doing something good.

There is a difference between being brave and being fool-hearty. Being brave is doing something dangerous for a good reason (like saving a life). Being fool-hearty is doing

something dangerous for no good reason (like a dare).

People who don't know history are doomed to repeat it.

It is better to a little bit inaccurate and be understood than to be hyper-correct and have your meaning lost entirely.

God is easy; philosophy is hard; theology is darn near-impossible; science is tentative! In life, I have preferred to go with the easy and the tentative.

One performs according to one's gifts.

Happiness is being married to your best friend.

The absolute best buffer against life's stresses is a supportive spouse.

Tube-feeding is water-boarding for seniors. God did not design us to live forever.

Go for quality of life. Dying is required.

Of all the drugs there are, "power" is the most addictive.

Beliefs are not real - only the power we give them. People have died for theories and dogma.

Beliefs and/or people have power over you if you let them. This is the way that Voodoo works; it is also how religious and political leaders hold sway over people.

The only free cheese is in the mouse-trap (Old Russian saying).

One of the greatest lies that doctors tell patient is, "We can buy you some time." Quality of life is more important than a few extra months of suffering.

Don't argue. Look it up, instead --- that's what dictionaries, encyclopedias, and the Internet are for!

When you are talking to people, look for inconsistencies in their story; if they change their story, they are likely lying.

When talking with people and they get

uncomfortable about a topic, they may be lying, or it may be something they want to cover up.

Don't buy it until you try it.

Trust your feelings. If it doesn't feel right, it probably is not right.

Follow the money to find out what's going on.

Three rules of business:

- 1) Get the cash up-front*
- 2) Be there when the customers need you,*
- 3) Know what your customers want and provide it for them.*

There is no democracy in business, the boss is king. (Sarosh Manekshaw)

I was given the Gift of Prophecy in graduate school; it's called statistics.

Do not argue with reality. What is proven is proven, even if you don't like it.

If you dated someone in the past and it didn't work out, don't date them again.

If you do not ask the answer is no.

Don't stay in a job you hate.

Have another job lined up before you quit the one you have.

The two most important keys to happiness are: 1) LOVE and 2) WORK.

Follow your interests in choosing your career. Making big bucks won't make you happy if you hate what you're doing.

When people ask you a yes or no question, if you can think of a third possibility use it. This will give you the edge.

Always remember, there are good people and there are great people, but there are no perfect people.

It is not just in your book; it is in everybody's book, and it doesn't mean a thing unless it is written on your heart. (Pam Vincent)

Dr Ken R. Vincent

Lucidity, Luminosity and Liminality: Alexander Batthyány and the Paradox of Return

Threshold 'Shifts'?

This article started life as a book review before I realised the implications of what I was reviewing. Hence what you are reading is both review and reflection. It is also extension: ending, as it does, with some suggestions as to how the RERC might contribute usefully to a most exciting recent development in the long-standing and ongoing quest to better understand religious, spiritual and anomalous experiences.

It all started when a regular visitor to my website referred me to Alexander Batthyány's recently-published book *Threshold: Terminal Lucidity and the Border of Life and Death*.^[1] The keyword here - as it will be throughout this article - is 'lucidity' and Batthyány uses it primarily to refer to those curious cases in which severely cognitively-impaired persons temporarily regain aspects of cognitive functioning long lost and thought gone forever. The impairments can be many and varied - advanced-stage Alzheimer's, meningitis, brain tumours, strokes, psychiatric disorders, and other conditions - but the sudden, apparently recovered lucidity can be as striking as it is surprising. Batthyány provides numerous illustrations in the form of testimony-extracts, of which the following is typical:

'My mother had advanced Alzheimer's. She no longer recognised us, and she didn't even seem to care who these "strangers" were visiting her once or twice a week. On the day before her passing, however, everything was different. Not only did she recognise us - she wanted to know what had happened in the course of the past year for every one of us, delighting in good news and shed[ding] the odd tear over bad news (just as this affectionate motherly woman had done before her dementia). Her comments were as wise and caring as ever. When she heard that my younger daughter had recently broken off her engagement and descended into a deep depression, she asked her to stay with her for a while afterward, because she wanted to talk to her in private. My daughter never told me what she discussed with my mother, but it

was a turning point for her. When we took our leave, we didn't know what to expect next: Was she miraculously healed of her dementia?'

Alas, she was not, for the testimony ends sadly: 'She died the same night.'^[2]

Hence the 'terminal' in the term 'Terminal Lucidity.' Indeed, this seems something of a constant in such cases: the death of the subject hours - occasionally days - after the episode.

It might be assumed that there have been numerous studies of these remarkable, rallying, turnarounds: even if such apparent rallyings do not seem to last. Surprisingly, the opposite is the case. As Batthyány notes, this is a young research field. The first peer-reviewed journal articles exploring the phenomenon only appeared in 2009 and, apart from Batthyány's own study, no other full-length exploration of the phenomenon has appeared to date in the English language. The nearest analogues are the studies of End-of-Life Experiences (ELEs) from Peter Fenwick and others and the myriad studies of the Near-Death Experience (NDE) that have appeared over the last half-century or so.

Exploring Terminal Lucidity

We will return to Near-Death Experiences in a moment. For now, it will be instructive to note some of Alexander Batthyány's other observations. Firstly, terminal lucidity appears to be cross-cultural, with his own research group having collected contemporary reports from the US, Russia, India, South Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Nigeria and China. Secondly, the phenomenon has been reported historically. Early on in his study, for example, Batthyány cites case reports from the mid-nineteenth century onwards which bear remarkable similarities to those cases collected by his own study group. Thirdly, instances of Terminal Lucidity only occur in a small minority of cases: some 6% of soon-to-die persons according to the first prospective study of the phenomenon published in 2009.^[3] Fourthly - and something dwelt on at length by

Batthyány - taken at face value, such extraordinary cases appear to pose profound questions for materialists committed to related variations of the view that mental states are reducible to brain states. For such should not be possible. Put simply: in a brain ravaged and massively organically impaired by advanced-stage Alzheimer's, for example, how can an earlier - sometimes much earlier - intact and completely lucid sense of self, together with that self's relationship to others and the world, suddenly (and apparently inexplicably) return? As Batthyány himself puts it: it is not possible to unboil an egg. A severely diseased and decimated brain cannot 'repair' itself like this. Yet such an apparent return of the self is reported: by very many relatives and friends of sufferers who - at least temporarily - dared to believe that their loved ones had 'come back.'

Terminal Lucidity and Near-Death Experiences

By the closing stages of the book the focus has shifted, somewhat. For the author shows himself well aware that improved and entirely unexpected lucidity occurs in other testimonies too: not least those related by Near-Death Experiencers who during their experiences frequently report both enhanced mental function and increased visual acuity. Again: how can such be possible in brains buffeted by the onset of physical processes that would be expected to occur during - and leading up to - episodes of clinical death? By way of answer, Batthyány quotes NDE researcher Bruce Greyson: extreme cases in various fields call into question received and usually widely-accepted scientific models. Hence, in the ordinary run of things we are justified in concluding that mental states are dependent on brain states. Only at the end of life 'when the brain stops functioning' are we confronted by situations where persons report 'the formula breaking down.' At such times we see another reality: the seeming independence of mind from brain, in cases of Near-Death Experiences and Terminal Lucidity alike. Indeed, Batthyány perceives a certain mutual reinforcement occurring within and between both sets of 'boundary' phenomena.[4]

Overall, Batthyány's thesis is young, bold and fresh, but not without its problems. How do you

quantify lucidity? How skilled are people at judging their own cognitive states, particularly in those liminal conditions where massive organic changes might be expected to occur such as at or near the point of death? Does the evidence from Near-Death Experiences really 'tip the balance' in favour of the reality of Terminal Lucidity (and vice versa)? And what about those 94% of cases where Terminal Lucidity fails to occur in any recognisable or appreciable way? In the closing chapters the author both acknowledges and attempts to respond to at least some of these issues, which remind me of some of the issues raised over the last several decades by NDE research. Indeed, it is also to the author's credit that he is prepared to make connections between his own field of research interest and that of near-death studies. The questions remain, however, as worthy of further and deeper exploration: both as regards Terminal Lucidity and as regards related, anomalistic, phenomena.

Paradoxical Lucidity

Readers familiar with the small but extant body of literature surrounding Terminal Lucidity might be wondering about its relationship to Paradoxical Lucidity, for both terms are used within the field, often seemingly interchangeably. Before reading Batthyány's book I had thought that they both referred to essentially the same thing but in places the author is careful to distinguish between them, the difference being that Paradoxical Lucidity refers to an episode of unexpectedly enhanced mental functioning in 'non-terminal' situations where death is not approaching or imminent. For me, as a researcher with a long-standing interest in the content of the RERC archive, this suggests an exciting challenge and opportunity: for within that archive Paradoxical Lucidity is certainly reported. A most vivid example of it, contained within an anthology of RERC accounts compiled by Meg Maxwell and Verena Tschudin several years ago, was reported by a Wireless Operator as having occurred after a battle in the Western Desert during World War Two. The relevant extract for our purposes here is as follows:

'For the first time since before the battle I was lying on the ground, rather than in a slit trench or inside a tank or armoured car. The dust of

battle, which had obscured the sky, had quite gone, and the stars were enormous and magnificent. A slight breeze came from the warm sea nearby and the air seemed to be slightly perfumed, from what source I could not imagine.

Suddenly - and it really was quite sudden - my train of thought accelerated and vastly improved in quality (I am trying to choose my words carefully to describe what happened). New and convincing ideas came into my mind in a steady torrent, flaws in my existing ideas were illuminated and as I made mental corrections to them the diminishing gaps in the logical sequence were filled by neat, brand-new lining concepts which made a beautiful logical pattern.

I was immediately aware that this was important to me as nothing had been before. The impact was so powerful that for a split second I felt something akin to fear, but this I rejected quickly because, simultaneously, I was enjoying an almost, nay actually, physical thrill of delight. Yes, I think delight is the right word.

What I want to stress most (and this taxes my powers of description) is that a small, every-day, critical part of my brain was standing apart, observing with astonishment what was going on in the rest of my thinking apparatus. How long the experience lasted I hesitate to estimate, but it was probably not more than ten minutes – perhaps less.’[5]

I quote from this remarkable account at length for a number of reasons. Despite the apparent ineffability of aspects of his experience, the subject nonetheless does a remarkable job of describing an event in which the quality of his thinking was massively - albeit temporarily - transformed: for the better. But there is no suggestion that he was near death at the time – or, indeed, that he was injured or otherwise physically impaired in any way. In fact, deeper analysis reveals that his testimony was submitted to the archive some twenty-seven years after his

experience occurred. According to the distinction made in Alexander Batthyány’s book, therefore, the peculiar event he describes so well fits firmly under the heading of Paradoxical, rather than Terminal, Lucidity.

Given the rich range of testimonies to religious, spiritual, and anomalistic phenomena that it contains, it is highly likely that the RERC archive contains many other such, or comparable, accounts of unusually enhanced lucidity. And the gap that can often be seen to exist within the archive between the actual occurrence of the experience and the submission to the RERC of the description of the experience - as in the above account - only serves to increase the possibility that these may be classified as paradoxically lucid, rather than terminally so. An opportunity therefore exists for the RERC to contribute to cutting edge research within a fresh and exciting field: for studies of Paradoxical Lucidity are currently more rare even than their Terminal ‘cousins.’ Perhaps the many still unexplored treasures that the RERC archive contains may enable us to deepen our understanding of these strange encounters with surprising and unexpected lucidity: encounters which may yet have much to tell us about that even more mysterious ‘country’ - that of the self.

Mark Fox

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

Notes:

1. Alexander Batthyany, *Threshold: Terminal Lucidity and the Border of Life and Death* (2023) New York, Saint Martin’s Publishing Group
2. *ibid*, pp. 52 – 3
3. *ibid*, p. 68
4. *ibid*, p. 155
5. Meg Maxwell and Verena Tschudin, *Seeing the Invisible: Modern Religious and Other Transcendent Experiences* (1990) London, Penguin, pp. 57 – 8.

EXPERIENCES

Sanat Kumara in my dreams

In 2017 I was preparing an exhibition for a local festival with my daughter and my mother-in-law. All three are into the arts, exhibiting what we called 'The Three Graces'. I was exhibiting paintings, our young daughter her first textiles and some masks, and my mother-in-law her stunning architectural watercolours.

While the two of them had a lot of material I was struggling with a major block. I just could not paint. I'd stopped painting after having a baby as I was too worried about fumes around the house and was now getting back into it. While used to large time gaps between painting outbursts this one seemed a bit extreme. The blank canvas on my easel was just sitting there, rather intimidating, plain, blank and huge... I was truly struggling.

Days passed and I was a bit panicked when an email came in informing me of a deadline for sending images for a brochure. Later on, a local paper called asking could they come over next week for an interview and to take some pictures with all three of us. I was panicking. While having lots of paintings of nudes and mythology, I had nothing I actually wanted to exhibit. That night I went to bed considering dropping out. We could call it 'The Two Graces' and they could do without me...This was not good...

That night I had strange dreams with two words persistently being repeated in them: 'sanat kumara'. I got up in the morning and kept repeating them trying not to forget them before I got to my computer. Still a bit sleepy, I put the words into a search engine and waited for results. I found out that Sanat Kumara was indeed the name of a person, if we could call him that. The name seemed to appear everywhere, in Mahabharata, in Theosophy and Neo-Theosophy, in the writings of Helena Blavatsky and so on. Many people seemed to know about this except me. I finally had the urge to paint. I realised something was 'loading up' from my consciousness as it usually does when I am painting. I was ready! Until I got to my blank canvas... I just could not start. The name was

pounding in my head but the hand would not take up the brush.

I went to another room to take another canvas. I thought this was just doomed. I picked up a rather large canvas and as I swapped them, I realised the canvas was not actually new. Many years ago I'd outlined a female figure on it in black paint and left it not really properly started, just sort of a sketch. That was it! I was now painting this painting. This picture was clearly begun years ago and it had finally 'ripened'.

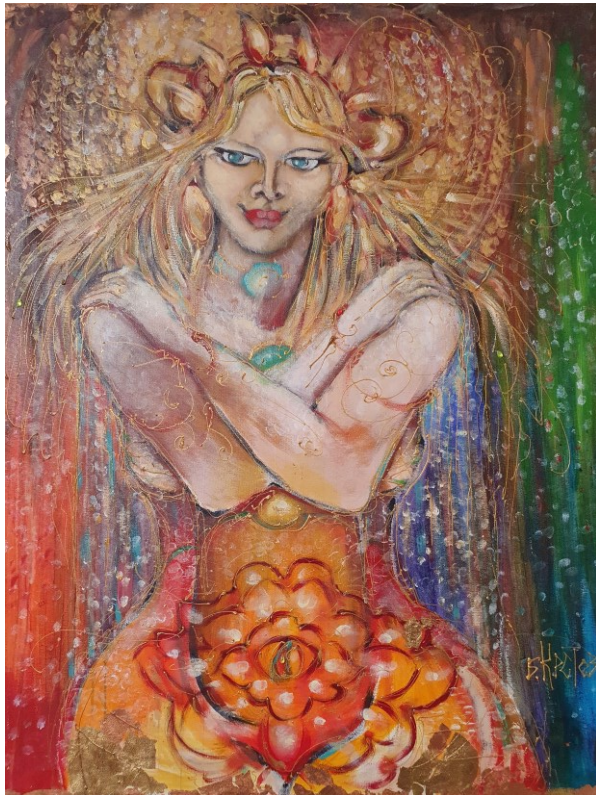
Suffice to say I painted fast. In fact, this thing was painting itself with great speed. Soon, the picture of a cosmic-like woman was appearing in my kitchen. She looked at me with her piercing blue eyes while I was carefully dressing her in her stellar garments.

That night I had another dream. This time of an enormous fish, a sea cow. I was swimming in a very deep but calm sea. Suddenly, out of the depths a huge fish appeared. It had big lips and a beautiful crown on its head. There were many jewels on its neck in a tight necklace. Then it spoke to me: 'I have a gift for you....' the rest I forgot as soon as I woke up. I had no idea what it said and I never remembered it again. However, I felt calm. A sense of serenity was almost permeating the whole room.

I went downstairs and searched again. I ended up on Vishnu avatar stories and the first avatar in the form of a fish. The ancient Indian statues looked much like my 'dream fish'.

I completed my painting for the exhibition and painted some others. It was all exhibited in time. I was, however not too pleased with it. It somehow did not quite work out as I'd wanted it. It was missing some important energy centres I wanted to (but did not manage to) paint on the woman's body. I was two centres short and had given up on adding them. They just did not fit. The painting seemed complete and incomplete. Also, Sanat Kumara appears to be a female in my painting and the ones I found in the old writings

seemed to be male. I gave up thinking about it and let it be exhibited as it was. Afterwards we hung it in our living room and I kept thinking about its imperfections each time I passed it by.



Sanat Kumara painting by Billie Krstovic, 2017

A very busy year later, a spiritual teacher from Hawaii arrived to our home to stay for the weekend as she was teaching an energy course in the UK. Among many participants from Europe

our entire household was also taking part in this. As soon as she arrived in our living room, she looked at the painting of Sanat Kumara and said: 'Ah I see, you are also painting eyes on the belly.'

It turns out this was exactly what she had arrived to teach. Nawis (translated as 'eyes') is, in the Andes, their name for energy centres on the body that trained Pacos (translated as shamans, priests, healers, community medicine people) work and heal with. I was stunned when I realised that my Sanat Kumara painting had the exact number of Nawis as in the Andean system (which is different in number to the Indian chakra system with which I was familiar) and in exactly the right places. Also, in the Andean tradition the Pachamama, the female creative energy in the Universe is the supreme force. It is the balance to the male opposite, the perfect compliment. So, my Sanat Kumara had its female counterpart. What I thought was an unfinished painting was exactly complete. It's just when I painted it, I did not know there was a such thing as an Andean spirituality, Pachamama, Pacos and the Nawis.

Today I am myself a fully trained Paco and I work daily with the centres so well illustrated by my painting.

Billie Krstovic

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Handling an apparition

The light in the hall was very poor but I thought that I could see the stairs well enough. I resolved to see how fast I could run up them so leaned forward and put my foot on the bottom stair. I was amazed to find myself flat on my face on the stairs. It seems that what I thought was the bottom stair was in fact an apparition and my foot had gone straight through it throwing me off balance! I went upstairs much more carefully next time to do odd jobs in the bedroom. Jobs done, I went downstairs carefully but was amazed to find a wall blocking my way where the phantom stair had been. This wall looked quite solid and had a fine-grained wallpaper in it. I reached forward to touch it and found that my hand went straight through it! It seemed to be made of extremely light tissue paper and I was able to grab a handful of it. Ever the curious scientist I wondered what would happen if I

exposed this tissue paper to full light. I opened the living room door to let a shaft of light fall on it and watched it shrivel away like a plastic film held close to a radiant electric fire.

Thinking the matter over a day or two later I remembered a professional friend of mine who went to a séance. In this the medium had produced ectoplasm. My friend was able to pick up some of this ectoplasm and wrap it up in a paper handkerchief thinking to have it analysed chemically. When he opened the paper handkerchief the next day there was nothing in it. It now seems to me that in many cases ectoplasm is an apparition which seems so real that you can handle it and is brought about by the emotionality of the participants.

Barrie Rowson

Dance of the Spheres by Eleonore Bruyere



Ascending to heaven

People *do* see this phenomenon - I know I am not the only one. My Indian friend, a Brahmin, on talking about meditating, advised me to go to a cemetery, where I might see a spiritual emanation. I didn't follow this advice though - it is not in our tradition. Anyway, it would be an intrusion of sorts.

Many years later, our local interfaith group met at a local chapel where a Buddhist nun was to address us. She had a special mission to those close to death. After her talk I asked if she'd ever seen the spirit leave the body at the time of death. Quite simply she said, "Yes"!

At my mother's funeral

When my mother died we held the funeral service at a church that had been central to my mother's life. She had taught at Blurton Church School during the war (after married women were allowed to teach!) and for a few years afterwards. She was married there, and I was to attend that church and was confirmed there – she, following my example a few years later. After moving away to a retirement bungalow in later life she had been attending her new local church. Yet it felt right to me that she should have her funeral at Blurton Church.

I was sitting at the front pew with family, and had an overwhelming feeling that mother's spirit might *still* be within her body; and that she was due to be transported to the crematorium. It occurred to me that with all the "spiritual"

insights I felt I had received, I might be able to help her soul to separate from the body here in her old church rather than by force at the crematorium.

Looking at the coffin in a meditative state, I saw a shape made of filaments of light emerge sideways, slowly at first, drift towards the 'choir', then with increased speed, as if being pulled, towards the altar, straight up and through the roof!

I felt I had done a last service to my mother - an enablement? I felt it would be a blessing. I left the church with a feeling of elation. I felt some embarrassment that I didn't show any sadness. Something wonderful had just happened: her soul had been guided towards heaven! And it was nothing I could share with anyone, ever.

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It occurred to me at that occasion how remiss our society seems to be; that we detach ourselves from the deceased too readily. Also, I will now consider the altar to be a really sanctified place, and will regard it as a gateway to "heaven". There *was* a Power which was as it were drawing Mother towards itself! *Towards the Great Sea*. That of Mother which remained was her spiritual essence – 'that of God'. But, as far as one could tell, it was being absorbed – individuality seemed to have disappeared. But then, who knows?

**Submitted by an AHT member**

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Ben Alderson-Day, *Presence: The strange science and true stories of the unseen other*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023. 285pp. ISBN: 978 1 5261 7350 8**

Anyone familiar with the content of the RERC archive will know something of what is sometimes referred to as the 'sense of presence.' Further back in time, William James knew of it too, devoting a haunting chapter of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* to the study of a type of experience he dubbed 'The Reality of the Unseen' and including the following extract of a much longer testimony as an illustration of its key feature:

'Quite early in the night I was awakened... I felt as if I had been aroused intentionally, and at first thought someone was breaking into the house... I then turned on my side to go to sleep again, and immediately felt a consciousness of a presence in the room, and singular to state, it was not the consciousness of a live person, but of a spiritual presence. This may provoke a smile, but I can only tell you the facts as they occurred to me.'

Indeed, such 'facts' abound, as Ben Alderson-Day's absorbing study amply reveals. They often occur in the company of other phenomena also, and it is in extending his study to encompass these that gives *Presence* such an impressive wideness of scope. For, as the author notes throughout, it is not simply that such things are *sensed*, but that they are *heard* and otherwise interacted with also, including - sometimes - in eerily tactile ways. Hence, for example, in the book's opening chapter, the author considers presence as an aspect of voice-hearing. Again, the source of such presence is invisible, yet there is often a sort of accompanying 'cloud of pure identity' - as one of his interviewees put it - that goes with it.

So what might such a strange 'cloud' *really* be? Ben Alderson-Day is an Associate Professor in Psychology and a Fellow of the Institute for Medical Humanities at Durham University but his 'presence odyssey' quickly reveals to him that his journey in search of understanding cannot be restricted to just one field. Hence, *Presence* encompasses religion, spirituality, philosophy, psychiatry, anthropology, history, neuroscience

and child development, to name but a few of the perspectives included. One chapter considers Tulpas and the possible relationship of their creation to that of the creation of an imaginary friend during childhood. Another considers felt presence experiences in relation to conditions such as Parkinson's disease and dementia with Lewy bodies. Another considers the 'bedroom invader' phenomenon and its possible relationship to sleep paralysis and other hypnopompic states. And yet another examines the experience of the sense of presence in relation to the research of the Society for Psychical Research and exploration into the sensory experiences of the deceased. Given the author's background, experimental psychology is never far from the scene and *Presence* builds much on the work of others in the field. It also benefits considerably from a wealth of interview material which is sensitively and effectively integrated throughout.

Despite coming away with the keen sense that *Presence* had raised more questions than it answered, some things *had* become clear to me by the end. As Alderson-Day demonstrates, even the ordinary everyday sense of 'selfhood' is itself a complex construction, and the argument that we might be feeling, essentially, the presence of ourselves during such unusual experiences is one which clearly fascinates and to a certain extent persuades the author. The ineffability of presence-experiences complicates analysis also (a fact which will be singularly unsurprising to long-standing students of anomalous experience), as does the author's by-the-end overturned notion that 'a single story would ultimately emerge' to explain everything. It doesn't, of course, but *Presence* does, at least, make a brave attempt to uncover one.

Given the impressive ambition and detail of the book it seems churlish to point out its omissions but omissions there are. The chapter on 'bedroom invaders' would have benefitted considerably from the inclusion and consideration of David Hufford's classic

folkloristic analysis of supernatural assault traditions as found in his seminal study, *The Terror That Comes In The Night*. It might also have gained by incorporating some of the research into UFO abductions by John Mack and others. Likewise, the chapter on Tulpas might have been fruitfully supplemented by some consideration - and, perhaps, testing - of the 'conjuring up Philip' experiments carried out in Toronto in the early 1970s: experiments which, as far as I am aware, have yet to be repeated.

Given the impressive number of questions surrounding the sense of presence that Ben Alderson-Day takes up, I was also puzzled by some of the rather obvious issues that *Presence* fails to address. Early on, for example, in the chapter on voice-hearing, the author notes with some regularity how negative the voices are. Why might this be? What may it be telling us about the source? That it is simply a matter of an inner voice being externalised? Or might this

often crushing negativity be revealing something else? Similarly, the *plurality* of the voices sometimes heard has also often struck me as worthy of more analysis than Alderson-Day allows. Why so often the 'we' as opposed to the 'I'? Recently I was conducting a study-group and one of the members - 'John', as I shall call him - was a voice-hearer. Throughout the ninety-minute long session the voices were talking to him continually, and, unbeknownst to me, John was duly listing everything that they were saying. At the end he showed me his list. Every statement started with 'we.' It puzzled me then and puzzles me still.

Overall, however, *Presence* is a fine study and a worthy addition to a complex and fascinating field. It is extremely well-written too.

**Mark Fox**

*Mark Fox is an independent writer, speaker and researcher. For more, go to [www.markfox.co.uk](http://www.markfox.co.uk).*

**John Hunt, *Bringing God Up To Date*. Christian Alternative Books, an imprint of John Hunt Publishing, 2021. 465pp. ISBN: 978 1 78904 703 5. £14.99**

This is a book which covers a huge spectrum of study and is a mine of information. It's a new presentation of a book he published in 2004 under the title *Bringing God Back to Earth*. It does not confine itself to Christianity, but rather looks at the religious history of the world and the effects that religions have had upon people of different times.

It is written in an easy and colloquial style with the odd humorous story. The author admits he grew up in an evangelical Christian tradition. But this has made him more passionate about 'moving on' and embracing a more inclusive spirituality, to the extent of rejecting institutional Christianity and looking beyond the smallness and parochialism of much of what is presented as religion today. He looks to a 'religion beyond religions' and hence the need to 'bring God up to date' "Religion is about how we relate to everything." (P. 403). He makes the point that the more mystically inclined practitioners of religion in the Middle Ages were often more advanced in their spiritual awareness than so much of popular religion today and the

shallowness of thought and destructiveness which it represents, especially in the form of the American 'far right'. He labours the point that modern religious language is so often literal in its scriptural understanding rather than an attempt to grasp the power of symbolism. "The Church today is stuck with the trivia of what used to be a powerful drive to transcendence." (P. 379) "As far as Christian understanding goes, we've generally moved backwards rather than forwards." (P. 64)

He shows awareness of the importance of personal religious and spiritual experience and cites the Hardy question "Have you ever been aware of or influenced by a power...." (p. 371) Personally, I would have liked to have seen more about the significance of paranormal happenings and acknowledgement of the wealth of material that explores the possibility of life beyond our human mortality. Nevertheless he acknowledges "There's a vast amount of literature detailing experiences of leaving the body, returning after brain death, communicating with spirits, better documented than the resurrection of Jesus, and

more rigorously checked.” (P. 276) And he does believe “We’re more than a bundle of molecules...a spark, a spirit, rather than nothing.” (P. 25)

He is in the tradition of liberal and interfaith theology, as he attempts to move people to a deeper way of thinking and away from the anthropomorphic models in which we seem so often to be enmeshed, often with destructive and abusive results. He sees in Jesus the model and the teaching for a better world, the need to ‘build the kingdom of God’. He also makes the point “Great teachers...don’t tell you what to think. They prompt you to think for yourself”. (P. 224)

I was impressed by his command of biblical information. He is anxious to show the inaccuracies and contradictions in the Bible and how it conflicts with modern scientific knowledge and understandings. He recognises our human frailty to believe we have ‘the answer’ when in reality we usually have a rather small part of the answer. You may not agree with everything he has to say, and some of what he says needs to be questioned, for example “Hinduism...the most successful religion on our planet today in terms of being followed by the largest proportion of the world’s population over the last few thousand years.” (P. 33) (However, it could claim to be the oldest of the mainstream religions.)

He does not give references to his claims, avoiding footnotes, as he feels “In a book of this size, which skims the surface of so many topics, Wikipedia is generally a good bet for checking out

the credibility of specific statements”.(P. 470) He does not give an index but he does give a useful compendium of related books.

For me the book could have been more powerful if shorter. I find the bulk of his criticism is aimed towards the Protestant Churches and the independent fundamentalist Churches, as he does not seem to be aware of the more progressive movements within the Roman Catholic Church, nor does he refer to the Orthodox tradition. For him, all religions are, in a sense, cults, shaped for personal and political ends.

Here is a huge compendium of what this illusive word ‘God’ can mean, as seen through history and in different cultures, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, and often involving conflicting ideas. You will find much to stimulate thoughts and discussion here. If you been reserved about coming forward with how you really think about God you will discover that you are not alone. This book raises questions and issues about religion which most of us, if not all of us, will find ourselves confronting at some stage of our lives.

It’s a good read, and if you thought that your ideas were outlandish or off the spectrum, you may be surprised to find that you are in good company. In his concern to ‘Bring God up to date’ he mirrors so much of the thinking of our time. This book can be a tonic for those who actually want to think!

**Jonathan Robinson**

**Edward Anderson, *Evidence of Animal Afterlife*, 2021. 188pp. ISBN: 979-8746261427.**

A question that has seldom been addressed by serious afterlife researchers is whether some (or all) animals may survive physical death in some form. This is the focus of a recent book by Dr Edward Anderson, an American psychologist, who has sifted the vast amount of existing afterlife literature to pick out data relating specifically to animals. His approach is rigorous and his findings and conclusions, while presented

in an informal and highly readable style, should impress any open-minded investigator.

Anderson takes his material from the main areas of afterlife research, including near-death experiences, evidential mediumship, physical mediumship, after-death communications involving visual, auditory and tactile experiences, out-of-body experiences, electronic voice

phenomena, death bed visions and reports of apparitions. Selecting only those reports with the best evidence, using strict criteria and only published literature, he finished up with 657 cases, which he argues (with some justification) must be a significant underestimate. Adopting William James's well-known 'white crow principle', he argues that logically not all of these have to be true to establish the fact of animal survival – just one would be sufficient.

Anderson's examples are not limited to cases reported by the owners of much-loved cats and dogs, which might be 'explained' by sceptics in terms of grief-induced wishful thinking. In many cases those reporting the experience had no particular emotional attachment to the animal. While usually cases involved an animal with whom the experiencer had had a close relationship, this was not always so. Cats, dogs, deer, squirrels, rabbits, monkeys, cows and horses were described at times in a factual and non-emotional way, which seems to dispose of the objection that such experiences are the result of comforting hallucinations about joyful reunions with loved pets. In some cases the animal was sensed by more than one person, and on one occasion a dog was seen and heard independently by both husband and wife. Sometimes an animal was seen by someone who did not know it and were unaware that it was dead or likely to die. Particularly convincing are reports from witnesses who had been complete sceptics about life after death.

Anderson also reports that his research has failed to uncover a single medium who says they have never encountered an animal in their readings or that animals do not exist in the hereafter. This consistency provides further evidence for animal survival and is supported by some well-controlled scientific studies of mediumship, indicating that some mediums can get accurate information about deceased pets which they could not have obtained by normal means. Animals reported by mediums are not limited to dogs and cats, but include a one-eyed monkey, a donkey, a parrot, a cow and two frogs. The sitters on some occasions were unaware that the animal had died.

The cases presented by Anderson are far too

numerous and detailed to be summarised in a brief review and need to be read in full to be appreciated. He goes on to examine and demolish some of the arguments put forward for limiting the opportunity of an afterlife to humans only and thus denying it to animals. Taking some of the key characteristics that have traditionally attributed to God – goodness, fairness, love, intelligence and concern for the powerless – he suggests that such a God would not give human beings an afterlife but deny it to animals. His reasoning here may not appeal to doctrinaire Christians, but it must carry some conviction for all those with more open-minded religious views.

Another common assumption about a possible mode of animal survival that Anderson effectively attacks is the notion of 'group souls'. The idea here is that when animals die, they are re-absorbed back into a kind of species essence (described by Anderson as 'a big amorphous blob'); so individual pigs do not live on as individual pigs, but are absorbed back into a group Pig Soul, losing whatever individual features they might have had. An exception to this 'amorphous blobbery' is said to be where an animal has been loved and cared for by a human being.

Anderson argues passionately against this conception. Assimilation into an amorphous blob cannot constitute a meaningful afterlife existence, he insists, as it rules out individual experience which makes individuals unique. It also contradicts all the evidence he presents; this always involves the experiencing of a specific, individual horse or cat or dog, never the generalised spirit or archetype of a horse, cat or dog etc. Likewise mediums describe particular, identifiable animals, not an amorphous category. There are no reports of animals appearing as amorphous group souls. Not all of the animals who feature in the book were cared for by human beings; some were neglected or had no discernible connection with any human being, indicating that animals do not need human beings to give them individuality in an afterlife. To think otherwise typifies an arrogant, self-centred view of ourselves as the superior lords of creation, with every other life form subservient to us. Animals don't need human beings to grant them individuality.

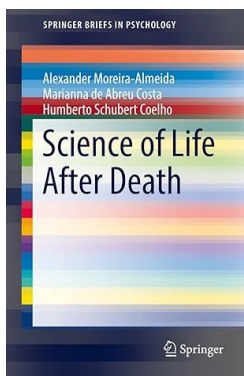
Animal survival is an important issue, then, and is not merely a matter of providing comfort for those mourning the loss of a beloved pet. Whether or not animals can enjoy an afterlife is a question with wide-ranging implications, extending into the areas of religion, theology and psychical research. It forces us to consider how we see our role and position within the natural world and creation, and how this may relate to our destiny after our own physical death. For

many reasons, then, it deserves much closer, rigorous investigation in afterlife studies than it has so far received.

**Roger Straughan**

*Roger is the author of *The Medium and the Minister: Who on Earth Knows about the Afterlife?* (John Hunt Publishing, 2021)*

**Alexander Moreira-Almeida et al, *Science of Life After Death*. Springer 2022. 101pp. ISBN 978-3031060557**



This is a very interesting book about life after death covering many different aspects of soul survival. As some readers might remember I have written before about some of my own unexplained experiences as a child and was very eager to read the chapters about out-of-

the bag so this bit you will need to find out for yourself.

There are also dedicated sections on Mediumship, Reincarnation, NDE and OBE experiences, Veridical perceptions and some alternative explanations relating to soul survival.

This is an excellent read for anyone who is interested to find out the latest in these areas and who is interested in research from South America and Asia.

**Billie Krstovic**

body experiences, near-death experiences and cases of children remembering previous lives with astounding accuracy. The book covers instances of Cases of Reincarnation Types (CORT) in some detail and discusses cultural differences and their importance for CORT acceptance or rejection. This really grabbed my attention as I was interested to see whether there were any in Eastern Europe.

The book also covers several topics within the theme including addressing several arguments against soul survival including myths related to Neuroscience, brain research and scientific stances on the notion of mind influencing the brain. It discusses the idea that 'Cartesian Dualism is rejected by learned people' and proposes that denying the dualism might be unscientific.

My favourite is the chapter about what would be possible evidence for survival after death in which the authors propose a question as to why an explanation has to be material at all? I found this chapter to have several excellent parts and the 'experiment' was undeniably interesting. I cannot say more without letting the cat out of

## POEMS

### We know

WE KNOW

That we are physical bodies in a physical world.

WE KNOW

That we depend on our community and on this planet to provide the nutrition and support we need to survive. We are not merely individuals, but interconnected. We are WE.

WE KNOW

The endless chatter of our mind. We are continually thinking, mulling things over, naming things, worrying, solving problems, feeling with our emotions. We can be immersed in thoughts and feelings, and they interact with our bodies. Sometimes these thoughts and feelings interact with those of other people, producing collaboration or conflict. All too often we delve into our past and impose it on the present. We imagine futures which excite or terrify. We do this as individuals and as communities.

WE KNOW

That we can watch this all happening and find

within ourselves a space, a stillness, a silence, in which we discover a sense of proportion, of belonging to it all, and new ideas, often wordless, about how to live freely as part of it. A space where we watch and listen and wonder without judgement or definition.

This space, this stillness, this belonging we call God, or Tao, or Brahma, or Creation, or life, or the universe.

WE KNOW

That the only things we can trust are whatever is genuinely here and now.

SOCIETIES forge stories and rules, and all too often, impose on and bully their members. Each is as bad as the others, whether they be communities or religions.

To express what we know, we need to drop these clubs and live together in the space that is here and now.

**Philip Tyers**

## OBITUARIES

### Dr David Greenwood



David must surely rank amongst the most highly qualified people I have ever had the privilege to work with, who maintained a wide range of interests throughout his life. I have known him mostly in his role as Hon. Treasurer of the Alister Hardy Trust, a role that he performed very diligently, and was often the first committee member to submit his reports for publication.

David became involved with the AHT in 2002 when he was appointed Administrator. At that time he was also a part-time lecturer at Lampeter, specialising in Religion and Science. From 1995-2012, with his wife Juliet, he ran a smallholding in Wales with cattle, ponies and sheep run on organic principles. Prior to 1992 David was employed by the Government's Property Services Agency, initially as a Chartered Engineer, then Project Manager, concluding his career as an Assistant Director responsible for the Crown Court Building programme in the Midlands. His interest in environmental matters led to him to join the Council of the Soil Association for a period in the 1980s.

In 1998 he completed a Bachelors degree in theology at Oxford University and qualified as a minister (licensed Reader) in 1994. David

administered services in the Diocese of Hereford, and the Church in Wales, and held a certificate of permission to officiate in the Diocese of Exeter.

He contributed articles to the Soil Association Journal describing farm visits, with one academic article on Acid Rain, and contributed as a reviewer to *Weather* (publication of the Royal Meteorological Society) and *Signs of the Times* (the publication of Modern Church). David wrote articles and reviews for *De Numine*, and kindly sent me delightful drawings by his wife Juliet to be used in the magazine as needed. While researching for his PhD, David contributed papers on transcendence in art to informal seminars held at the University of Aberystwyth.

Although I never met him in person, I feel the loss deeply, and the Trust has lost a great contributor in so many ways.

**Rhonda Riachi**

In the autumn of 2023 David Greenwood was given a diagnosis of terminal cancer. Like many of us in the AHT, I thought there would be more time. But suddenly the news came that there was to be no lengthy battle. David died on October 5th. We held a reflective memorial to him on Members' Day in Oxford, giving us all the time and space to remember him and all he had contributed to the Alister Hardy Trust.

David and I had worked closely together over the many years of his involvement with the Trust as administrator, Treasurer and Vice-Chair. David was always supportive of my various ventures and activities, particularly as Director of Communications. We kept in touch through regular phone calls and emails, meeting from time to time for lunch in Ledbury. We shared many interests, both undertaking PhDs in later life and particularly enjoying the art of Caspar David Friedrich. I shall miss him very much indeed.

**Marianne Rankin**

David and I would never have met but for the Alistair Hardy Society. We were chalk and cheese, and I realise more and more in retrospect how extraordinary David was to have accepted and even encouraged me in the activities I engaged in on behalf of the Society when he was the soul of discretion and I was apt to rush in where Angels fear to tread. Almost as soon as I arrived at Lampeter I co-organised the first Spirituality and the Creative Arts Weekend under AHS auspices. Eyebrows were raised...

David's love of the Arts (visual and musical) was so much a part of him, perhaps not apparent on a superficial acquaintance, but this gave him a depth of character, and maybe a point of contact with a renegade like me. David personally took

on the task of inviting me to edit *De Numine*, a post I filled for 15 satisfying and enjoyable years. During this time I was able to get to know David better, and meet Juliet his wife, whose charming illustrations often graced the pages of *De Numine*. We all lived in West Wales, and got the chance to meet outside the Society a number of times; I became very fond of them both, and it struck me anew, thinking back and remembering with affection our long association, how people working for a common aim (for us the exploration of spirituality and religious experience) are able to connect in a way that would be unlikely to happen in the 'ordinary' way of things.

**Patricia Murphy**



Morning in the mountains by Caspar David Friedrich. Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg. Public Domain. <https://www.wikiart.org/en/caspar-david-friedrich/morning-in-the-mountains>

## John Franklin

John Franklin and I met in 1996, when he was involved in arranging a fundraising event at Sudeley Castle near where I live. Up until then I only knew his name from communications about the Alister Hardy Society, which I had joined as a mail member from Singapore – and John would annually remind me that my subscription was due. When I met him, he had skin cancer, but his gentleness shone through his mottled face. He overcame the disease then.

I soon realised the extent of his involvement in the Alister Hardy Society and Trust. I was still asking everyone I met there if they had had a spiritual experience (the scepticism, which led me to join, was slowly receding). John's story and his life silenced my critical approach. We became friends as well as colleagues, and our spouses got to know each too, so our meetings were social occasions as well as work-related.

By last year I knew that John was ailing, and for a while his optimism swept me along. However, when he and Andrée moved into a care home, and he hoped that it would be temporary, I suspected not. I helped him to sort out the books he wanted to bequeath to the AHT, and took care of a statue of a meditating Rastafarian prisoner, which he wanted to be housed at the RERC in Lampeter. I knew when I last saw him, by then so very frail, that I would not see him again. Then there was the funeral.

The 18th January was clear, sunny and freezing cold, when about forty of us gathered in the beautiful St John the Baptist Parish Church in Cirencester for John Franklin's funeral service. It was led by Canon Graham Morris, who immediately established his personal connection with John through an amusing description of their theological discussions.

### **John Franklin and the Alister Hardy Trust** (*eulogy given by Marianne at the funeral for John*)

It is a privilege to have been invited to write about John Franklin's involvement with the work of Sir Alister Hardy, who was a renowned marine biologist, a Professor of Zoology at Oxford, and who in 1969 began



John with Andrée in London

The service was unusual (no hymns) and deeply moving. Music by Thomas Aquinas, Ēriks Ešēnvalds, Josquin Des Prez, Peter Maxwell Davies and J. S. Bach was interspersed with prayers, silence and a reading from Ecclesiastes Chapter 3: verses 1-13. There were tributes from John's family, highlighting his compassionate and generous nature. I spoke of John's contribution to the Alister Hardy Trust, setting it in the context of his own spiritual experience – from which I quoted, using his own words (*full text below*).

I was able to thank John for his extraordinary contribution to the Trust. He gave his heart, mind and soul to the work of Sir Alister Hardy and we will miss him deeply.

**Marianne Rankin**

to research people's religious and spiritual experiences as evidence for his view that humans are spiritual animals. I will begin by explaining what drew John to this work.

It was while he was still at school that John had a spiritual experience which informed the rest of his life, and this is from his own description:

*It was a hot summer Sunday afternoon, I had gone out for a walk, and was lying on my back in a cops ... I was aware of the singing of birds, the buzzing of insects, the sound of bat against ball in the cricket nets near-by... and watching the flickering of the sun-light through the leaves of the lime tree.*

*I was not really thinking of anything, and then my mind went... blank - suddenly I found myself surrounded, embraced, by a white light, which seemed to both come from within me and from without, a very bright light but quite unlike any ordinary physical light. I was filled by an overwhelming sense of Love, of warmth, peace and joy - a Love far, far greater than any human love could be... I had the feeling of being 'one' with everything, of total unity with all things, and 'knowing' everything - whatever I wanted to know, I 'knew', instantly and directly.*

*And I had the sense of this being utter Reality... far more 'real' and vivid than the ordinary every day 'reality' of the physical world... But, at the time, I could not 'ground' the experience, and I felt that I could not talk to anybody about it, so I locked it away, pondering over it...*

When he heard about Hardy's work,

exploring experiences similar to his own, John wanted to find out more and to get involved. When he took early retirement, he was able to contribute. This he did by drumming up support for the work of Hardy's research centre through a membership scheme, which rose to 650, due to fundraising events in London which John arranged with Bronwyn Astor. The Alister Hardy Society came into being, with John as Honorary Secretary.

In 1988 John set up a London Group, which he ran until he moved to Cirencester in 2015. Meetings with guest speakers were followed by a buffet. Andrée was always supportive, helping behind the scenes, and the Alister Hardy Trust owes her a huge debt of gratitude.

John often made significant donations to support the work and for 13 years he served as a Trustee. In later years John researched and wrote a detailed history of the organisation and he left his extensive library to the Alister Hardy Trust.

He was an inspiration to us all and we are deeply grateful for all he contributed to the Trust. We will miss him more than I can say.

John first saw the light as a boy. It shone within him and guided him throughout his life.

May that light now embrace him.

**Marianne Rankin**

## **John Franklin and the London Group**

Doubtless many tributes will have been paid to John Franklin as Secretary of the Alister Hardy Society (under its various names), Trustee and, one of those stalwart members who enabled it to continue during the difficult times. He was also the Secretary of the London Group, serving with a succession of chairmen of whom I was privileged to be the last. His enthusiasm was boundless, as was the fund of contacts he had

from which to draw speakers, although he was always open to suggestions from others which he would follow up assiduously. His technical competence enabled him and us to keep records of group meetings.... as he did for the Society generally.

He saw a succession of not only chairmen but of venues. When I became a member, the London

Group met at Maria Assumpta in Kensington Square. Then their fees went up and that venue grew too expensive for us even though, at that time, we could rely on a good attendance, sometimes even to bursting point. For several years we met at St Mary Abbott, but then that became grew too expensive and we met at the Essex Unitarian Church, Notting Hill. In all these venues our relations with the hiring officers were extremely good and this was overwhelmingly due to John.

Unfortunately, as fees continued to increase and attendance declined, the Group came to the point where we could no longer afford to hire a venue in central London. One member wondered if the Society/Trust had not become a victim of its own success. When Sir Alister had launched his famous question, his was a lone voice calling in the wilderness. Thirty years later there were many such voices, as was illustrated by the number of organisations who sent

### **John Franklin - a personal tribute**

I was very saddened to hear of the death of John on Christmas Eve last year.

I first met John many years before our association with the Alister Hardy Society. We met at an interfaith event in London which was hosted by the World Congress of Faiths. It was quickly apparent that we shared a common interest in religion and spiritual experiences. I would regularly see John at other events and he invited me to one of his AHS Group Meetings in London of which he was the organiser (alongside Rowena Rudkin)

Many years later I was invited to become the Vice Chair of the AHS and was relieved to find many familiar faces who were already involved, including John who was the Honorary Secretary. I would regularly travel with John to meetings either by train or car and always enjoyed our conversations which ranged from topical issues to more 'heady' matters of religious experiences.

Later when I became chair of the AHS John was on hand to gently guide and advise me with his wealth of knowledge about the workings of the

representatives to one of the days we did hold at the Unitarian Church in Notting Hill. They had come from many parts of the kingdom.

Whatever the reason, hiring a venue in central London was beyond our means. At the suggestion of another member we tried to meet at a pub he recommended where, if we met on a Monday evening, they offered us very favourable terms. This worked for a time but even that petered out and it was decided that the London Group must close.

This was a great sorrow for John. However, it was not long afterwards that he and Andrée moved to Cirencester and it is hard to imagine the London Group without him. He would have been a hard act to follow.

**Rowena Rudkin**

organisation. I have very fond memories of visiting John and Andrée in their home in Greenwich and later in Cirencester when they relocated.

John truly was the heart and soul of the AHS and Trust and was always willing to give his time be it at meetings, taking minutes, helping to organise events, or engaging with members, most of whom he knew personally. I recall arranging a collection for John when he stood down from the role of Honorary Secretary and was surprised by the amazing response from the members who not only contributed generously but also took time to send in personal reminiscences about John. It was evident that he was highly regarded by the membership and colleagues both past and present.

John's written history of the Society and Trust is the definitive place to look for those facts and dates which elude our memories over the years. On more than one occasion I have found the answer to a query within the pages of his book. The history will form an important part of John's legacy and will remain a valuable asset for future

researchers and those with an interest in Alister Hardy and the study of spiritual and religious experiences.

Finally, on a very personal level I will always be so very grateful to both John and Andrée for the kindness that they showed to my wife during the final months of her life. In both Oxford and Wales they took time to support her which allowed me to deal with the practical matters of running an

### **JVF: The One and Only**

I join folk in paying sincere tribute to a very special person. Through the forty years of my membership, John has been the warmest and most courteous of friends.

Behind all that valuable detail he painstakingly assembled, and all those conferences he recorded... and the hassle of Committee Minutes (and cables and cassette tapes!)... lay a tenacious man driven by a vision of universal truth and divine harmony, to which he has been utterly faithful, and passionately dedicated to sharing.

### **Always the gentleman**

John was a stalwart member of AHS/AHT. I just want to remember what pleasure I found in knowing him during our time together under the AH umbrella - always the gentleman, always kind, always a delight. His 'History' of the organisation, *An Exploration into Spirit*, was an invaluable resource to me as editor of De Numine, and as he updated this twice before he left us it should go on proving such a resource for years to come. I only once encountered Andrée, his wife, whom I believe he met when he was a young soldier in

event. I will always remember those occasions and can never thank them enough for their support and kindness.

In memory of a very dear friend who will be sadly missed by all who had the privilege to know him.

**Andrew Burns**

*Former Chair - Alister Hardy Society*

An exceptional missionary and witness and inspiration.

John has been a trusty servant of the Alister Hardy organizations, a committed Trustee for terms of office, and a lifelong trustee of the A.H. enterprise.

May the realm of light and love he foresaw now embrace him.

My heart goes out to Andrée in her loss.

**Tristram Jenkins**

France. Andrée and I only met once, over lunch at Llantarnam Abbey during one of our residential weekends. I remember thinking how romantic their meeting had been and how pleased I was that he should have been blessed with such a charming, chic, and very French, wife. He richly deserved his luck. My thoughts are with her now.

I am so glad to have known you, John.

**Patricia Murphy**

## LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Last year was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Alan Watts. He was an Englishman who wrote extensively, drawing on Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Taoist teachings. He moved to America and was a major writer on spirituality there, and many of his books are still in print and available here. He trained to be an Episcopal (Anglican) priest and served as such for five years, before resuming his writing and speaking full time. Every time I come across one of his quotations, it stands out against the background of more contemporary writers such as Eckhart Tolle, and Neale Donald Walsh. He operated knowingly within the One Tradition, Perennial Philosophy.

Watts has two different styles. The first is an academic style, in which, for example, he presents his research on Buddhism or Hinduism. Even when it is academic, it remains accessible. The second is the easy style of a radio presenter. In both he brings to bear his wide reading and time spent both meditating and talking with practitioners of those religions.

Alan Watts' quintessential book is *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*. It explains that we are not the idea we have of ourselves or present to the public. We are one with the universe. This he follows through in different ways in his many different books.

So many people are out of touch with any religion, and registering as 'no religion'. For years I have searched for contemporary writers who can meet their needs. Do readers have any suggestions of those writing material comparable to Alan Watts today, particularly in the UK? Furthermore, Watts grew up south of London. Are there any "Northerners" contributing from this tradition?

Alan Watts wrote throughout his long life. Which young writers are taking up this mantle today? So often I have discovered a fresh writer, such as Alan Watts, only to discover they died long ago. A recent contributor to these pages has only just printed some pages from her youth, and her

contribution included dialogue with her deceased best friend. I was influenced in my teenage years by Peter Spink, who drew on Francis Dewar. I've recently discovered Don MacGregor, but he is of similar age to me.

It is twenty years since I was on the Religious Experience Masters programme and would like to update. Any suggestions, please?

**Philip Tyers**

*Church of England Chaplain, HMP Liverpool*  
*ptyers@outlook.com*

Dear Editor,

Remembering Lady Susan Glyn (see obituary De Numine 75, autumn 2023).

We never actually met, but Susan's artwork and poetry was often featured in De Numine. We exchanged cards at Christmas, always with a few words until she found it difficult to write. Susan's daughter told me that our exchanging cards meant a lot to her, and hers to me certainly gave me a lot of pleasure. She sent me pictures of her garden as well as pictures of her glorious stained glass, and I looked forward to them. She also sent me a book of plates of her stained glass which I will always treasure. Our communication in the context of De Numine, as well as her creative work, gave me a sense of who she was, but I would love to have met her face to face.

I always hoped my husband and I would make it to the South of France one day and beg an invitation to tea in the 'Baie des Anges' where Susan lived. Alas we did not get there, but her daughter, having come across my Christmas cards, wrote to tell me about her 100th birthday which they celebrated with champagne. This was just a few weeks before she died – what style, right to the end...

**Patricia Murphy**

*For an example of Susan Glyn's work see:*  
*<http://stainedglass.llgc.org.uk/image/5770#largeimage>*

## REPORTS

### The 8th Annual General Meeting of the AHT, 9th March 2024

The Chair opened the AGM by reporting the sad deaths of two trustees and supporters. Dr David Greenwood had first served the Trust as administrator and then as honorary treasurer and trustee. John Franklin had served the Trust since 1987, playing a key role in the Alister Hardy Society and serving as trustee and chronicler of the RERC, Society and Trust. A minute's silent reflection followed.

Updates were then presented on the activities of the Trust since the end of the last financial year, July 2023.

#### Update on trustees and staff

The Chair reported that two trustees, Andy Burns and Dr David Rousseau, had decided to step down and not seek re-election. The Chair expressed appreciation for the important contributions made by both. Following the sudden death of Dr David Greenwood, Dr Tom Farley had taken over as honorary treasurer.

At the end of 2023, Dr Marianne Rankin stepped down from her role as Director of Communications. The Chair expressed the trustees' appreciation for the way she had served in that role and contributed to the life and work of the Society and the Trust in many other ways. He also expressed appreciation to Rhonda Riachi and Billie Krstovic for their continuing work on *De Numine*, and to Rachel Dowd both for her careful and thorough work on caring for our archival materials, and for picking up the role of administering the membership.

#### Updates on finance, operation, archives, database

The Treasurer reported that the financial year had been changed so that it now corresponds with the calendar year, and that the current value of the AHT investment portfolio stood at £301,000 comprising medium risk investments, realizing an income yield of circa 4% per annum.

The Treasurer then outlined the work done to streamline the operation of the Trust, noting the

need for such a small charity to find better and less costly ways of working, including embracing online technology as much as possible. John Harper had taken over membership administration in early 2023 (on a voluntary basis) and had improved the efficiency of the operation, allowing Rachel Dowd to take over the membership administration more recently. The Trust hoped to setup online donation and payment methods for easier membership payments (especially overseas) and fundraising; it was already using Eventbrite for easier booking and payments for events. Online banking had been activated for the new Lloyds account to simplify accounting. Mike Rush was helping to set up Microsoft 365 (which provides free licenses for charities, offering sharing of documents, cloud storage, Teams, etc.) to assist with running the business from different geographical locations (the aim being to find trustees/groups prepared to take on key work portfolios on a voluntary basis and to work together at a distance).

With reference to the archive of materials *other than the accounts of RSEs*, there were now 85 boxes containing over 1,300 sets of documents (and approximately 12,000-15,000 separate documents) with summary listings available in Excel. Work on the David Hay archive has also continued with voluntary support from John Harper and his sister. This comprised approximately 200 items either authored by Hay or relating to his work.

With reference to *the accounts of RSEs*, Rachel Dowd, with guidance from John Harper, started working on this material last summer, and has now been through nearly 2,000 records. Rusting staples and paper clips (and creases) are being removed from original written accounts submitted to Sir Alister Hardy. Each account is being placed in its own plastic pocket within a manilla folder, together with a printout of its typed transcription. Rachel Dowd has been checking the transcriptions against the original texts for accuracy and completeness.

The Trust had recently costed and approved the purchase of specialist storage materials to meet archival standards, amounting to approximately £17,000. The total cost of this project work will require a drawdown of funds from the AHT portfolio. Although this will reduce the Trust's future income it is a necessary investment to future-proof the organisation. The trustees are considering a fund-raising campaign to help reduce this level of drawdown and to rebuild our reserves.

The contents of the digital database of RSE transcriptions had now been backed up and transferred to Excel to allow each transcript text to be viewed, checked and edited in due course. A future project will be required to update this database and improve its front-end functionality. The trustees have also agreed that the original paper archive needs to be properly protected against future catastrophic events (such as fire or flood).

John Franklin had kindly donated some books and a sculpture to the AHT. Marianne Rankin has identified the books relevant for the AHT library, and these have been transported to Lampeter.

### **Update on RERC**

Professor Bettina Schmidt reported that since July 2023, four students on the MRes Religious Experience had graduated: Sarah Porch-Lee (USA), Erica Letzerich (Greece), Jolyon Williams (UK), and Mark Robbins (UK). Currently five students are writing their dissertations. She expects three new students to start the MRes in October. In addition, two new PhD students

began working on a religious experience topic last June.

There had been a delay with publication of the 2023 issue of the *Journal of the Study of Religious Experience*, but it was hoped to publish two issues this year to make up for that.

A new book is to be published shortly from the RERC: *Jeff Leonardi and John Reader (eds), Environmental Spirituality and Wellbeing: integrating social and therapeutic theory and practice. Sheffield: Equinox.*

Professor Schmidt has published two articles, in collaboration with Dr Kate Stockley of the Centre of Mind and Culture in Boston, USA, on their research project on non-ordinary experiences. A third article has been submitted and a fourth may be written later.

The postponed conference on music and spiritual experience has had to be cancelled due to its lead, John Harper's medical situation. Instead, Professor Schmidt has arranged an online conference on Sir Alister Hardy's legacy, to be held on 14 June, with Professor Wesley Wildman as keynote speaker (giving the Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture), together with three members of the AHT presenting their research on the RERC accounts.

**Tom Farley, Hon Treasurer**

## Report from the AHT Director of Communications

### Farewell...

This will be my last report as AHT Director of Communications, a role I have held since 2012. My involvement with the AHT has included serving as a Trustee for thirteen years; leading the Oxford and Cotswold Group for ten years; and two three-year terms as Chair of the Alister Hardy Society, later the AHSSSE. I have been involved in drawing up and disseminating our publicity leaflets and have given talks in schools, colleges and to a range of spiritually-based organisations. With Andy Burns, and supported by local AHT members, I have organised our annual Members' Day and in 2022 gave the Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture. Those gatherings

were important on many levels, as far-flung members managed to meet and get to know each other.

My interest in the subject of spiritual experience led to my writing an Occasional Paper (3rd Series, Paper 2) and *An Introduction to Religious and Spiritual Experience* (Bloomsbury, 2008). The Trust generously funded my PhD on *Researching the Fruits of Experience in the Religious Experience Research Centre Archive* for which I am most grateful. I am now working on publishing my findings. It has been a privilege to be AHT Director of Communications.

**Marianne Rankin**



The Stages of Life by Caspar David Friedrich. Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig, Public Domain.  
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/caspar-david-friedrich/the-stages-of-life>

## EVENTS AND NOTICES

### **Living out of Joy, Dying into Love**

Residential course led by Rhonda Riachi  
Grasmere, UK, 3rd – 7th June 2024

From the 17th century to the present, Quakers have collected evidence of what happens after our death and before we arrive on earth. Through discussion, presentation and recordings, we'll explore personal testimony in the QFAS anthology, *The Life That Never Ends*, and share uplifting accounts from other texts, including scientific research. The afternoons will be free for you to explore Grasmere and more. Bed and full board included. Course begins at 8:30pm Monday and finishes at 11:00am Friday.

<https://glenthorne.org/events-programme-2024/>

### **Unitarian Society for Psychical Studies**

Annual Conference:

Saturday 28th September 2024, 10am – 4pm  
Warwick Unitarian Chapel, CV34 4AX, UK

Speakers: Prof. Rob Gandy: *Haunted Roads*;  
Dr. Mark Fox: *Scent from a Distance: Olfaction, Premonitions & Preternatural Knowing*; Alan Murdie: *White Lady Apparitions: Spectres or signs from the Cosmos?*

Tickets: £15. Bring packed lunch.

[infousps@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:infousps@yahoo.co.uk)

<https://unitarianpsychical.org.uk/events/>

### **Therapy Research Survey**

The topics of death and life after death are considered taboo subjects in some quarters. This is a survey from the University of Chester into clients' experiences regarding these topics in therapy. If you live in England or Wales and are now or have been in counselling or therapy in the past, you are invited to complete a short survey into your views about death and what may come after and your experience of being able to talk about these issues in your counselling or therapy.

<https://app.onlinesurveys.jisc.ac.uk/s/chester/survey-of-therapy-clients>

### **Post-Graduate Certificate in Psychospiritual Care**

Practical and accessible training in psychologically-informed spiritual care for health and social care professionals of all cultures, faith and beliefs

The course aims to support the development of an effective, holistic and inclusive cross-disciplinary approach to health and social care whereby practitioners with different roles are able to work collaboratively to understand the complex, significant relationships between their patients' and clients' medical, therapeutic and spiritual needs.

Taught by educators and leaders within Oxford Health NHS Trust in partnership with Oxford Brookes University over one academic year via a series of study days (usually Thursdays) and supported personal study.

Level 7 (60 credits, resulting in a Postgraduate Certificate. It can be combined with other Level 7 modules to lead to a Postgraduate Diploma or Masters).

Next cohort begins September 2024.

**Closing date for applications is 1 July 2024**

<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxcswell/courses/pgcert/>



200  
1822 - 2022

# Sir Alister Hardy's Legacy: The Study of Religious Experience

**The 2024 Conference of the Religious Experience Research Centre**  
Supported by the Alister Hardy Trust

**Friday, 14 June 2024, 14:00 – 19:00 (online)**

**Book at** <https://tinyurl.com/2a3x6dm2>

**Keynote: Prof Wesley J. Wildman,  
Center for Mind and Culture, Boston**

*The Dimensions of Spirituality Inventory*



**Other speakers include Prof Jeff Astley, Rev. Dr Seth Jones,  
Dr Zsuzsanna Szugyiczki and Rev. Richard Vroom.**

**Admission is free**