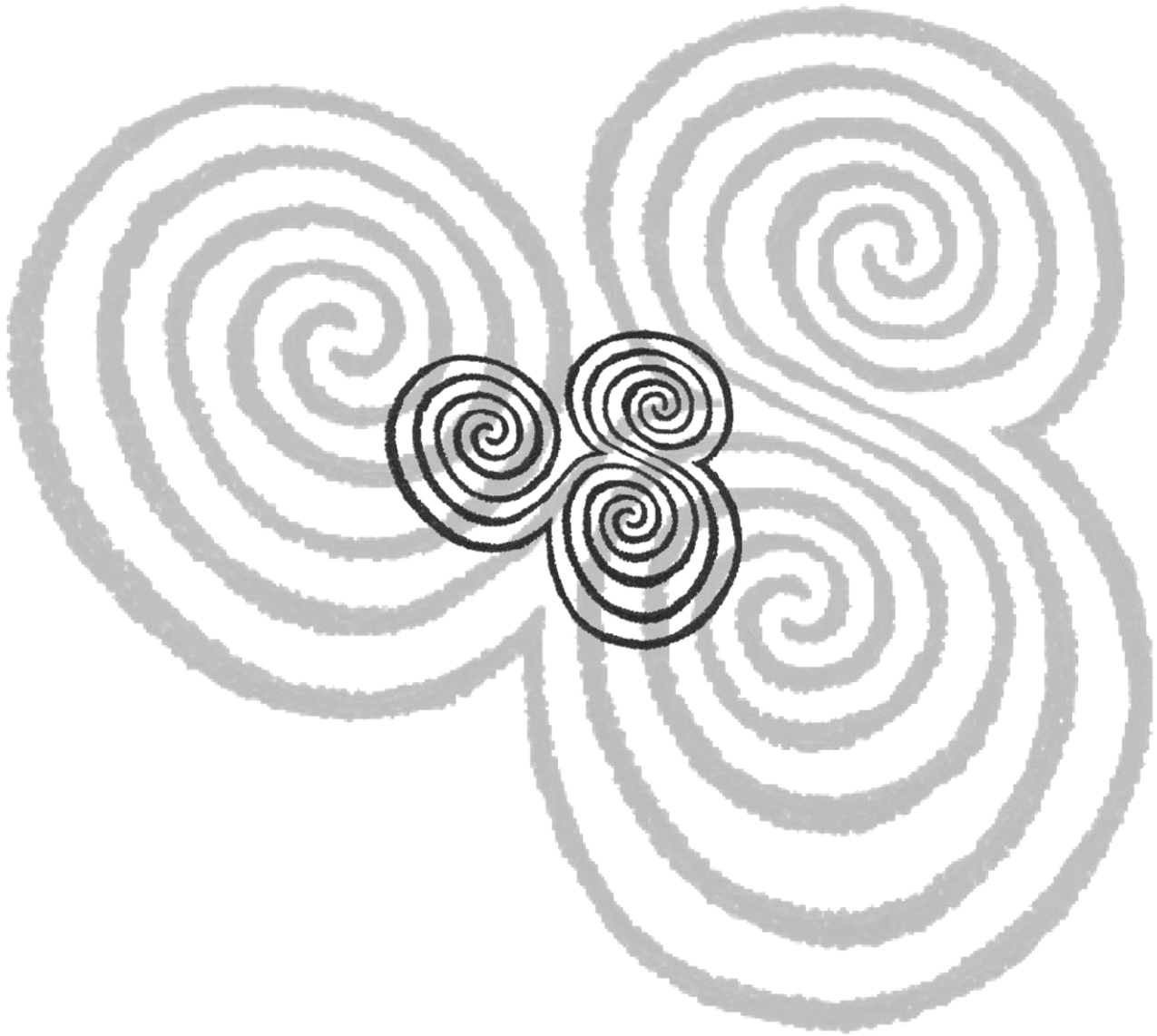


De Numine

The Magazine of the Alister Hardy Trust



Supporting the Religious Experience Research Centres
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**For information about the Trust, including membership, please contact
admin@alisterhardytrust.org**

DE NUMINE: The Magazine of the Alister Hardy Trust

HONORARY EDITOR: Rhonda Riachi: denumine@gmail.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Billie Krstovic: denumine@gmail.com

WEBSITE CO-ORDINATOR: Mike Rush: mikerush@virginmedia.com

<https://www.studyspiritualexperiences.org/>

LOCAL GROUP ORGANISERS

Oxford & Cotswold Group: Beth Crutch: alister.hardy.oxford@gmail.com

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE RESEARCH CENTRE, LAMPETER, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The Library, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED, Wales, UK.
email: rerc@uwtsd.ac.uk

RERC DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH: Professor Bettina Schmidt: b.schmidt@uwtsd.ac.uk

ACCESS TO THE ARCHIVE: application details on the web site at

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

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE RESEARCH CENTRE, LINCOLN, Bishop Grosseteste University

Alister Hardy Professor of Religious and Spiritual Experience: Professor Jeff Astley:
jeff.astley@durham.ac.uk

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	3
ARTICLES	4
The many faces of healing	4
The spiritual aspect of the Mother-Daughter Bond: can it enhance healing?	8
Give peace in our time, O Lord!	10
Universal Karma	15
Finding God?	19
Towards inner peace: a personal journey	21
The reception of plainchant	22
EXPERIENCES	24
“Almost” Mystical Experience	24
Energy perception	25
LETTERS	27
OBITUARIES	28
Dr Ken R Vincent (20 August 1943 to 11 June 2024)	28
POETRY	29
One drop contains the ocean	29
New worlds between	29
Heather	30
I am Yeshua	31
BOOK REVIEWS	33
NOTICES and ADVERTISEMENTS	36

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EDITORIAL

Healing our world, healing ourselves

Our theme this issue has been addressed by contributors who have explored both the individual and the cosmic aspects of healing. A delightful synchronicity happened with the topic of the first two articles by Paul Dieppe and Mel Hall; I had no idea they would both contain stories of knees! The image of the world on its knees came to me; both in the sense of being laid low and in the traditional position for the act of prayer. Both meanings are appropriate here. Janet Mackinnon and Michael take different angles on the urgent global threats we face; the dark clouds on the horizon have grown larger and we need to bring more healing light to find a new way forward. Prayer is definitely called for.

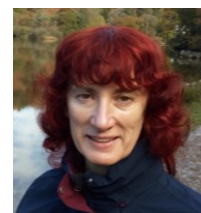
Personal spiritual experiences and searching for answers are common themes in the articles by Steve Petter and Michael Colquhoun. Bernard Salter's summary of his research on plainchant and how listeners respond to it may prompt some readers to ponder the pivotal role of music in religion and spirituality, including the difficulty of explaining our own personal experience of it. The emotional stimulus of music, when appropriately used, can also be a great healing influence.

Some of the fruits of spiritual experience are shared in our Poetry section, and we include there an uncategorisable piece by Tim McCormick on the most famous healer of them all, Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth. Quotations from other healers are peppered throughout the issue, gleaned from my small book collection.

Farewell, Ken

In our Experiences section we are grateful to include the last piece submitted by Dr Ken Vincent before he died in June this year. We send our thanks to his widow, Pam, for the obituary, and our condolences to all the family at the loss of such a warm hearted, learned and gifted husband, father and grandfather. Thank you, Ken, for your many and varied contributions to De Numine over the past four years.

Many thanks to all contributors to this issue. Please note the deadline for our spring issue is end February.



Rhonda Riachi

To avoid simplistic approaches to healing we should be aware of the reasons people are not healed. In my ministry I have discovered at least eleven of these reasons and I imagine that we will discover several more:

- 1. Lack of faith. When the disciples could not cure the epileptic demoniac, Jesus upbraided them for their lack of faith (Matt.17:14.20). I believe that this is the reason we do not have more healings taking place in our churches today; a general scepticism about healing sees its occurrence as nothing more than a natural psychological process.*

Francis MacNutt, *Healing* (1988) Chapter 18

ARTICLES

The many faces of healing

Paul Dieppe

I have been doing research on healing, in the context of human health, for the last 15 years. I have published articles in academic journals, and written a book about it (Dieppe 2024), but I still cannot tell you what healing is. That is because it is not a definable 'thing'. It is experiential, and there are many different types of healing experience. However, I think what distinguishes a healing experience from other phenomena is that it results in 'transformational change for the better', allowing people to flourish. In this article I would like to share one of my experiences of healing as well as some of the findings from my research, to illustrate the multi-faceted nature of different healing experiences.

My knee

I make no apology for starting with one of my own healing experiences, because, as stated this is an *experiential* issue, not a scientific one.

I was a rheumatologist, with a special interest in osteoarthritis. Then I developed osteoarthritis of my knee, and obviously did not know what to do about it! I went to a trusted medical colleague who took x-rays and examined my knee and said that it was a really bad knee and that I needed a joint replacement; he offered to arrange that for me very soon. I demurred.

The following week I went to interview a healer in her own home. She told me that the only way to understand healing was to experience it and asked me if I had a problem she might tackle. I told her about my knee. She asked me to roll my trousers up so that she could put her hands on that knee. We did that, and then something strange happened. She seemed to 'disappear' from the room. She was still there physically, with her hands on my knee, but the essence of her seemed to have gone. My knee felt warm and strange. I felt very confused, but in some way connected with her or with something bigger. I cannot describe this strange experience

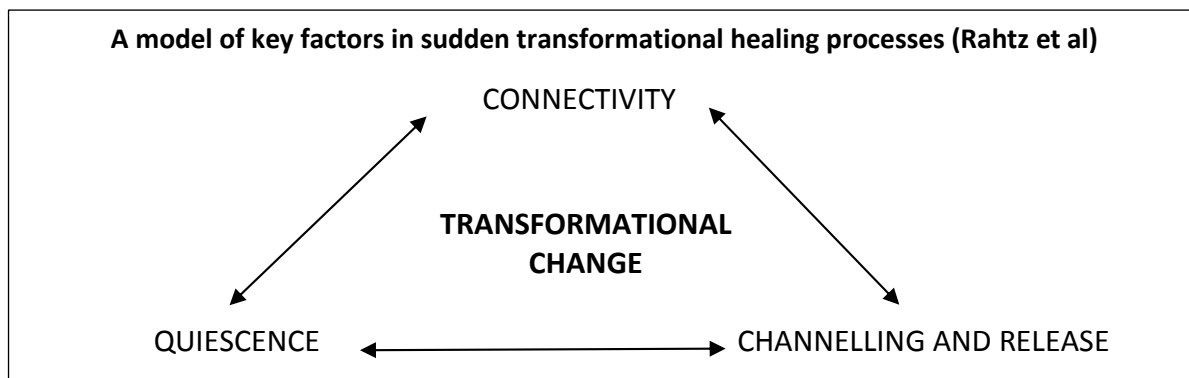
adequately – it was 'other worldly'. After a while she 'came back' looking exhausted, and told me that I had a very bad knee, but that she had been able to make some progress with it. I was sceptical, but over the subsequent few days my knee seemed to be giving me much less discomfort, and gradually it stopped bothering me. That was 15 years ago. I have not had a knee replacement, and my knee gives me very little trouble now.

Sudden healing moments

Some people experience a sudden transformational change in health status as a result of healing. After some healers and their clients had told me about this I decided that we should do some formal research on the phenomenon. The opportunity came about when we (my research colleagues and I at the University of Exeter) were invited to help at a training day for healers at a health and healing conference. We were allowed a little time to do our research and distributed questionnaires asking participants to write a short story about any sudden healing moment they had experienced. We received 72 responses from an audience of about 120, and most of the postcards did report a sudden healing moment, either for them as a subject, or for one of their clients. Transformational change was the main theme, but allied to that were concepts of quiescence (peace and stillness) control (just letting things happen) and connectivity (a sense of connection to another), shown in the diagram below (Rahtz et al 2017).

Long healing journeys

I was fortunate enough to be able to study accounts of long healing journeys with some American Colleagues. John Scott, a primary care physician, had collected long interviews from several people who had been identified as having healed from chronic disease or trauma by their physicians. A group of us set about helping John to analyse the data.



We extracted three main themes key to their healing journeys:

- Making connections
- Finding safety and trust
- Acquiring new resources and skills

Many of the interviewees had suffered terribly over long periods of time, but they had emerged and able to flourish, for their benefit and the benefit of others around them.

We developed a graphic representation of the healing journey which, along with our data, was published in the BMJ – see below (Scott et al 2017).

Healing in Lourdes

Although not a Catholic, I have made several research visits to the Marian Pilgrimage Site in Lourdes, South West France. These visits were facilitated by Dr Sarah Goldingay, a colleague in Exeter University, and the Head of the Medical Bureau in Lourdes, Dr Alessandro de Franciscis. I had the privilege of being able to study records of people whose visits to Lourdes had resulted in miraculous cures, to interview many pilgrims and their carers, and to observe and take part in the many healing rituals and activities that go on during the pilgrimage season.

Literally millions of people go on pilgrimages to Lourdes each year, from all over the world. Large groups of sick people come for one or two weeks, bringing with them priests, doctors, nurses and helpers. I was able to spend time with some of the English speaking groups.

There have been relatively few ‘miracles’ ratified by the Vatican over the years. I was impressed by some of these, but wondered if they are similar to the occasional ‘unexplained natural remissions’ that those of us in the medical profession experience. Strange, ‘miraculous’ cures or disease remissions do occur outside of religious settings. But we concluded that the real miracle of Lourdes was not about amazing cures, rather the huge amount of help pilgrimages provide for sick people as well as those around them. After their time in Lourdes many people go home in a much better state. We concluded that Lourdes provides a ‘low-tech high-touch’ intervention that improves health. And we think that the essence of the intervention is in the ‘nourishing exchanges’ that take place there – everyone is equal in Lourdes, they all feel safe and cared for, and there is a lot of prosocial behaviour (helping each other). We discussed these findings in a book chapter (Goldingay et al 2021).

Healers on healing

I have interviewed a lot of people who self-identify as healers. They held disparate views on the nature of healing, but there were many common themes.

On the issue of what activates healing, the idea of making a connection with the client was a prominent feature of their answers to me, for example:

“By connecting with another in a real and meaningful sense”

When asked what the outcomes of healing are,

concepts of harmony, and balance dominated, for example:

“Moving from a state of chaos to one of order”

Soon after I started working with healers I came to a conclusion which I have since seen little reason to change. It was that healing is facilitated by:

“Focused attention with good intention”

‘Why?’ – The problem of attribution

My own healing experiences, as well as the findings of my research with healers and in Lourdes kept raising the issue of ‘why?’ Why has this been a healing experience, why has X got better?

It is a part of being human to ask such questions: we want to know why. People often attribute beneficial change to something that makes no sense to others. As a doctor I saw people who got better from a condition that I had treated them for. I tended to think they had got better because of the interventions I had administered, but their views were often quite different – saying for example that it was all down to some change in diet or environment that I thought could have had very little influence on their problem.

The issue of attribution was very clear in Lourdes. Not surprisingly, most people who improved thought that it was due to the intervention of Mary, or God through Mary. The few non-believers, like me, did nothing to

contradict those views; that would have been cruel.

So why do I think my knee got better? There are three possible explanations:

- Natural remission
- A ‘placebo’ effect
- Some metaphysical healing action

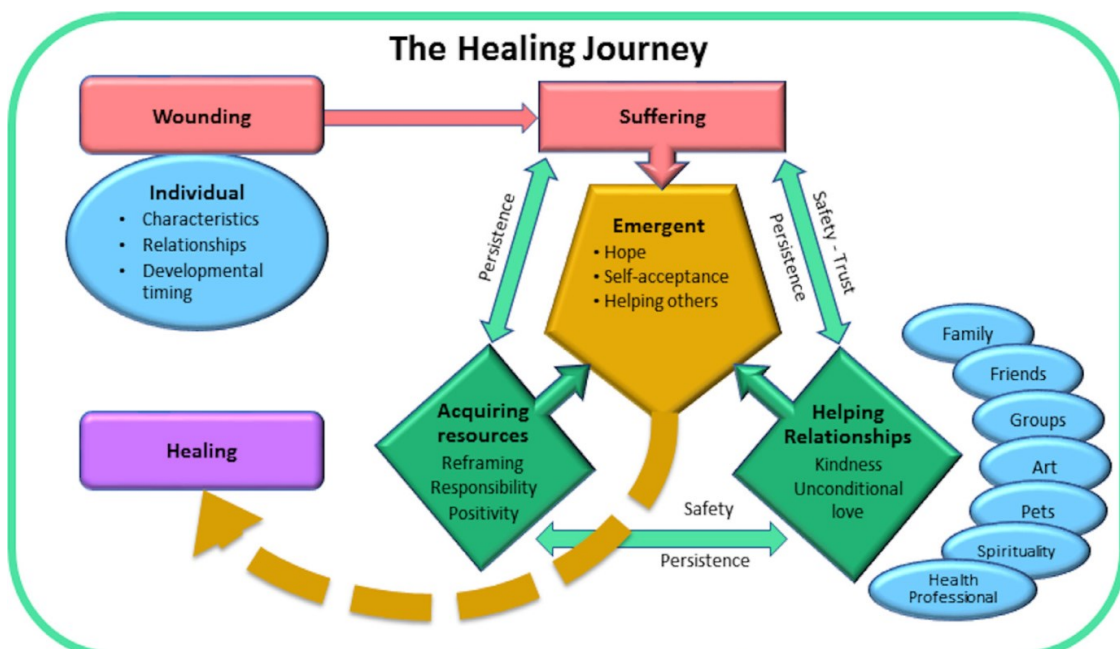
When I talk to my medical colleagues about my interest in healing many dismiss it as nonsense, others say it is all down to the placebo effect – that strange phenomenon of people improving when they are given dummy tablets or sham operations.

It could have been that a placebo effect that made my knee better. We do not understand how placebo responses are activated, but someone has to administer the placebo, so it could be about human interactions, which is what I think healing is about. So maybe we have got it the wrong way round. Perhaps placebo responses are healing responses?

Conclusions

At the start of this article I said I do not know what healing is, as it is an experiential issue, not something that you can clearly define and pin down. I certainly do not understand it, but I have come to some conclusions about key elements to the activation of a healing response.

The theme that has dominated all of my research findings and experiences is the



concept of *connection*: meaningful, deep connections between two people (such as healer and client). I think healing connections can also be with another non-human living thing – with animal or plant life. But they are profound, deep connections, akin to love.

I wonder if healing is simply ***‘love in action.’***

Prof Paul Dieppe qualified as a doctor in London in 1970. He became ARC professor of rheumatology in Bristol and an expert in osteoarthritis. He became Dean of the Bristol Faculty of Medicine and moved on to be Director of the MRC Health Services Research Collaboration. Towards the end of his career he changed his research interests from biomedicine to caring and healing. He has recently published a book on that work, *Healing and Medicine: a doctor’s journey toward their integration* (Routledge 2024).

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For me, healing is a combination of energy, empathy and love. Labels to describe healing can be a hindrance to integration but, of course, have to be in place to be able to integrate into healthcare... to me it doesn’t matter what people want to call my therapy, as I am trained and insured to deliver Reiki and Spiritual Healing. My experience has taught me that this flexibility is the best attitude for healing to be accepted in a hospital or hospice.

Angie Buxton King, *The NHS Healer - Onwards and Upwards* (2017)
Chapter 1

The spiritual aspect of the Mother-Daughter Bond: can it enhance healing?

Melanie Hall

Being a Spiritual healer is not something you confess to lightly, especially when you inhabit the world of an empirically dominated, scientifically biased academia, a milieu where the subjective and spiritual often garner less credibility and respect. But times they are a changing, and I hope for the better, with a more open minded, nuanced, holistic understanding academy. So, after conducting a healing session on my mother two weeks ago which was both peculiar, profound, and powerful, I have decided to come out of the healing closet. I would now like to ask the De Numine readership for their collective wisdom on the topic of the spiritual connection between mothers and daughters. Does anyone have any insight as to whether this female bond would or could positively influence the act of spiritual healing?

First, let me explain a little about my perspective on spiritual healing and healers. My understanding is that there are typically three common routes into healing: being born a healer; being older, wiser, and having accrued knowledge and life experience; and becoming a healer as a result of a shock or illness. My route into healing was through this third route, due to concussion and being in shock for three weeks following a car crash. I came out of this event with the oddest conviction that if I put my hands on people's painful knees, I would be able to sooth the pain away.

Puzzled and seeking answers, I acquired Harry Edward's guide about the practice of Spiritual Healing (1) and became a solitary student, reading avidly, from Evelyn Underhill and William James to St. Augustine and Teresa of Avila. Several years later I found the non-denominational, National Federation of Spiritual Healers (NFSH), now the Healing Trust, and underwent their two-year training programme. I learnt how to attune to healing energies and perform the healing act following the NFSH guidelines and code of ethics. I learnt that "Hands-on" healing was misnamed, and in fact involved your hands hovering about 1-2

centimetres off the body. I began to practice healing quietly on friends and family. I kept my healing energies hidden at work, in my day job as a lecturer, but used them in the background, often through a discipline of silent prayer, to promote student confidence and positivity.

Throughout this time, I carried out healing on my mother for a variety of reasons, painful knees, neck injuries, following a bereavement. Yet it did not occur to me that the often-stronger healing experience was anything unusual. I explained it away as just being 'on-form,' or 'better attuned.' That is until two weeks ago, when I carried out healing on her after total knee replacement surgery. I observed all my usual practices. We had soothing music playing, and I had attuned. So far nothing out of the ordinary. I put my hands on her shoulders then proceeded slowly to pass my hands down her body until I reached her injured leg, as per the usual NFSH healing act. Putting my hands either side of her knee, I felt an immediate feeling of heat and after a few minutes, the oddest sensation, as if someone had hold of my right hand and was pushing it against her knee and trying to push the joint back into alignment. I often have my eyes closed during a healing session, so I quickly checked my hands, which were not touching the knee and were hovering near the knee joint. I closed my eyes again and the sensation intensified as if the joint was being pushed. This continued for about 10 minutes, after which I concluded the healing.

I was rather surprised afterwards when my mother described the sensation of her knee joint being pushed into my left hand and having to open her eyes to check whether I did have hold of her knee. Also, her surprise when she saw my hands were not actually touching her.

The physical sensation I had experienced of pushing and pressure was too strong to be a product of my imagination and was independently corroborated by my mother's testimony. Finally, perhaps belatedly, this experience has led me to question – is it a

mother-daughter thing? Is there a particular spiritual connection between mothers and daughters that facilitates, influences or results in a stronger and more profound healing experience?

Since then, I have had a brief look for literature/research (2) on this topic and not found a great deal out there. There is research on the psychological bonds between mothers and daughters, predominantly on dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships but not much on the spiritual aspect of the bond. I have a positive, close loving relationship with my mum, but due to our somewhat secular family background I would not have said our bond was especially spiritual. So, is there something special about the mother-daughter bond that facilitates and amplifies the process of spiritual healing? And to come back to the collective wisdom of the De Numine readership, does anyone know of any similar spiritual experiences between mothers and daughters or experiences

they are willing to share on this topic?

Also, if the literature is indeed sparse on the spiritual connection between mothers and daughters, would anyone be interested in taking part in a cooperative, collaborative project to discuss and investigate this further?

Melanie (Mel) Hall

University of Wales Trinity Saint David
m.hall@uwtsd.ac.uk

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There is no limit to the nature of diseases which can be cured or relieved by absent healing. We cannot yet tell how these are carried out in detail, but we do know that the benefits are real.

Harry Edwards, *A Guide to Spirit Healing* (1950) Chapter 6

Give peace in our time, O Lord!

Reflections on war in the Middle East and Europe

Janet Mackinnon



Encampment protest outside the Bodleian Library's Radcliffe Camera in Oxford during June 2024

Give peace in our time, O Lord; because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God.

English Book of Common Prayer (1662)

In the following personal reflections, I explore some of the religious foundations of 'The Rule of Law', particularly in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I shall argue that spiritual experience is not just about mystical phenomena, but also a calling to people from 'the region of their peaceful selves' to engage with our profound worldly challenges:

...Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows
where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us...

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1799-1850)

The iconic Radcliffe Camera library is a place I normally associate with neo-classical harmony, while the view to the east from the upper reading rooms of All Souls College's neo-gothic sundial inspires feelings of transcendence. By contrast, on my last visit to Oxford's Radcliffe Square the sense of aesthetic satisfaction and, indeed, spiritual wellbeing derived from one of the world's great library buildings was challenged by scenes of protest about the war in Gaza. This experience left me deeply conflicted: whilst I sympathise with university campus and other protests, I also recognise these disrupt important legitimate activities. My own position on the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict reflects those of the International Court of Justice (to which I shall return later) and the International Criminal Court, including charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the leaders of Hamas and Israel. Similarly, I support the latter's judgements on Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It is noteworthy the ICC's Chief Prosecutor is British Muslim lawyer Karim Asad Ahmad Khan and the UK is widely recognised as birthplace of the rule of law's modern incarnation. The day after my visit to the Radcliffe Camera I went for the first time to the numinous Temple Church and London's Inns of Court. Both share profound associations with the rule of law, and in the following personal reflections I want to explore some of the religious and spiritual foundations of this concept with reference to contemporary wars in the Middle East and Europe. My starting point, however, is the 1662 *English Book of Common Prayer* which has been called an 'instrument of national reconciliation' after the Civil War of 1642-51.(1)

This version of the Anglican prayer book is still used today in London's Temple Church. The site embodies the conflicted history of Christendom in Britain, Europe and the Middle East, including medieval Crusades, the English Reformation and Civil War, as well as damage from aerial bombardment during World War II. Founded by

the Knights Templar, an order of crusading monks who protected pilgrims to the Holy Land in the Middle Ages, the Temple was their headquarters in England. It was modelled on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, regarded by Christians as the most sacred place in the known world. The Temple Church is strongly connected with Magna Carta (Great Charter), the first document to put in to writing the principle that the king and his government were subject to the law, as 'a power in itself' **(2)** Magna Carta has been described by the UK government as 'the most potent symbol of the rule of law' which 'guards against the arbitrary use of power.' **(3)** For various reasons, the concept has some personal resonance, including the burial of probably the leading modern writer on the subject, former Lord Chief Justice Bingham, in a Powys cemetery near the River Wye (whose management challenges what has been called the environmental rule of law). London's Bingham Centre for The Rule of Law was established to promote his broad interpretation of the concept as "one of the greatest unifying factors, perhaps the greatest," including its relevance to international relations and security.**(4)** As such the rule of law might legitimately be described as a potential contemporary instrument for national and international reconciliation and peace in our time, whilst recognising these aspirations 'represent an ideal, but an ideal worth striving for.' **(5)**

Returning to Israel and Gaza, including the Hamas atrocities of 7 October 2023 and subsequent retaliation by the Israeli government, the rule of law (or its absence) is juxtaposed with the law of war in a podcast of last year from the barristers Matrix Chambers. **(6)** The podcast is hosted by Richard Hermer KC who has since been appointed attorney general for England and Wales by new British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer. Hermer's appointment almost certainly reflects the seriousness with which the present government views the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The attorney general was one of eight prominent Jewish lawyers, including former Supreme Court President Lord Neuberger, to sign an open letter calling upon Israel to observe international law in response to the 2023 Hamas attacks. **(7)** Following Israeli

government support for unprecedented destruction (and consequent loss of life) in Gaza, it now seems likely the present UK government, unlike the previous one, will not challenge International Criminal Court arrest warrants for the Israeli prime minister and defence minister. Lord Neuberger has previously said:

The Jewish input into the rule of law has been almost as disproportionately large as the Jewish input into science and music... Judaism requires very little of its adherents in terms of belief, but a great deal in terms of what they can and can't do. The rabbis and gaonim were judges and arbitrators as much as religious leaders. **(8)**

By contrast, in defiance of the rule of law - and prior to the current military campaign - Israel's government sought to dismantle significant parts of the judicial system leading to the largest public demonstrations in the country's history. Speaking before the events of 7 October 2023, a Professor of Law from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem stated: "The principle of the rule of law is an entrenched one in Israeli society." **(9)** Others fundamentally challenge this assertion, however, not least in the treatment of Palestinians since the creation of the state of Israel, reflected in the expression Nakba (the Catastrophe). **(10)**

I want to return now to the role of 'The Academy,' or academic institutions more generally, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and in particular recent controversy in the United States arising from an article entitled 'Towards Nakba as a Legal Concept.' **(11)** Written by Rabea Eghbariah, a Doctor of Juridical Science candidate at the Harvard Law School, and published in the Columbia Law Review, the article fuelled a discourse both within and well beyond the US legal community about censorship of human-rights lawyers and scholars critical of Israel. Prompted by apparent 'Ivy League' universities' suppression of freedom of speech, two student editors from the Harvard and Columbia Law Reviews, described 'bureaucracy weaponised' in the Guardian newspaper. **(12)** This discourse should be read alongside the international university campus protests which peaked around the same time in

June 2024, as epitomised in occupation of the Bodleian Library's Radcliffe Square. Again, to return to my personal conflict around this form of protest (subject to legal challenge by Oxford University and other academic institutions), I would suggest that although justifiably bearing witness to the undoubted horror inflicted on Gaza, it can also distract public attention from wider attempts to (re-)establish a 'Rule of Law' framework in the real conflict.

Rabea Eghbariah has written elsewhere of 'The Ongoing Nakba: Towards a Legal Framework for Palestine.' (13) Due to apparent suppression of his work by 'The Academy,' the article was first published in 'The Nation' which describes itself as 'a progressive' American magazine. Partly due to my lack of in-depth knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, undoubtedly one of the contemporary era's most intractable problems, I cannot support all Eghbariah's contentions, or those who share his worldview. Nevertheless, their position needs to be reflected in any serious attempts to resolve the situation by the international community. It should also be strongly emphasized that the Nakba is not an Islamic concept:

Al-Nakba (الناكبة) is an Arabic word for catastrophe. Yet, the Arabic word is pregnant with deep meanings that in English lacks sufficient equivalence. Al-Nakba summarizes the ethnic cleansing and genocide that Zionist militia committed systematically and deliberately against the Palestinian people, the dispossession of Palestine from its indigenous people, the feeling of loss and defeat, and grieving for loved ones and land. Al-Nakba never ended... A simple look at the 1948 Nakba and the current genocide in Gaza demonstrates the brutality of the Zionist regime and its attempt to erase Palestine and the Palestinians. One irrevocable consequence of the genocide and continuous Nakba is the alarming decline of Palestinian Christians and the near-extinction of Palestinian Christians in Gaza...(14)

Acknowledgement of this broader religious perspective on a conflict that is often framed in terms of militant Islam, on the one hand, and

Antisemitism on the other, is very important. Moreover, the Nakba is increasingly understood not just as a human tragedy but an environmental one in terms of its impacts on natural resources and the built environment, including religious and wider cultural heritage.

Destruction of cultural heritage was a key theme I explored in De Numine last year in the context of Russia's invasions of Ukraine from 2014, beginning with the annexation of Crimea. (15) Whilst comparisons between the Russian occupation of Ukraine and Israel's assault on Gaza can and have been made, there are also significant historical and modern differences in the factors that must be taken in to account. Areas where comparisons are relevant, however, include undermining of secular legal systems reflecting international rule of law norms, combined with the resurgence of 'history wars' linked to religious nationalism, in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and a form of quasi-spiritual imperialism in Russia's present-day war on Ukraine and, potentially, on Europe and the West. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Israel's prime minister should denounce a July 2024 advisory judgement by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to the effect that his country's occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 is illegal with this reaction: "The Jewish people are not occupiers in their own land — not in our eternal capital Jerusalem, nor in our ancestral heritage of Judea and Samaria" (the occupied West Bank). (16) The United Nations ICJ is charged with 'upholding the rule of law at the international level' and the ruling is 'largely consistent with EU' positions according to the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs. (17/18) However, the court has been far less decisive in judgements on Russia's invasions of Ukraine, with a diplomatic spokeswoman for the latter declaring earlier this year: "Just like the U.N. Security Council can't do anything, the U.N. court also can't." (19)

Notwithstanding the horrific scenes from Gaza, war in Ukraine poses the more serious threat to world peace and rhetoric to emerge from Russia is considerably more inflammatory than Israel's. In March this year the Russian Orthodox Church declared a 'Holy War' against Ukraine and the

West in what commentators widely described as a ‘remarkable’ document:

From a spiritual and moral point of view, a special military operation is a Holy War, in which Russia and its people, defending the single spiritual space of Holy Rus', fulfil the mission of “Holding”, protecting the world from the onslaught of globalism and the victory of the West, which has fallen into Satanism. **(20/21)**

Just prior to this statement, Vladimir Putin was re-elected as Russian president in the absence of any real opposition. By contrast, the Israeli prime minister has been seriously challenged at home and abroad by those who regard him as an ‘existential threat to the state of Israel’, although this has yet to influence his grip on power or the war in Gaza. **(22)**. Meanwhile, as previously indicated the election of a new British prime minister with a strong legal background has been hailed as an opportunity to ‘restore the UK’s reputation as a champion of international law’. **(23)** Similarly, lawyer and Democratic US presidential candidate Kamala Harris in her first campaign rally asked the United States: “Do we want to live in a country of freedom, compassion and rule of law, or a country of chaos, fear and hate?” **(24)** Her question applies to both national and international politics, and might be regarded as an existential challenge, to quote William Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* again, to ‘... the very world, which is the world/Of all of us...’

Failure to collectively understand and respond to this brings the risk of even more conflicted religious geopolitics in the Middle East and/or the prospect of a ‘Great Powers War’ between Russia and the West. **(25)**

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To be sure the attitudes oft influence the physical condition of the body. No-one can hate his neighbour and not have stomach or liver trouble. One cannot be jealous and allow anger of same and not have upset digestion or heart disorder.

Edgar Cayce (Reading 4021-1) in Reba Ann Karp,
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Universal Karma

Michael Shearer

There is a practical concept along the lines of a suggestion that human behaviour and natural events are interconnected. The idea reappears at various times and in different cultures through history and around the planet. In the East, and increasingly in the West too, the possibility of personal Karma is familiar. What we individually do, or don't do, will have a personal effect. There will be repercussions. We reap what we sow.

The notion I am considering here, however, is wider and deeper. It is the thought that what we do in our groups, and especially what is done by those with the most power, our rulers, has significant consequences beyond what is considered the social and psychological realm. Nature is affected by what we do, especially what is done by those in charge.

Various versions of this view are present in Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, Chinese history, Native America, Aboriginal belief, Medieval Europe, and so on. The list is long, much longer than this, and diverse. I'll briefly consider three examples: Ancient Greece, Renaissance Europe, and China.

Ancient Greece

Over the centuries, at least in the West, the Gods and God have become increasingly absent, or at least not obviously present. In Ancient Greece they are everywhere. The world is divided into the animate and the inanimate. Animal entities, like ourselves and animals (this is why they are so called) can move themselves.

However, there is also the inanimate, such as rocks, which, by definition, cannot move themselves, and yet they sometimes move. Something else must move the inanimate, as they cannot be doing the moving alone. So it must be invisible, very powerful forces, called Gods, which shift the sea, the land, the planets, the stars.

The Gods are not mysteriously elsewhere, they are integrated into the world. Furthermore,

there isn't the divisive split, which culminates in Cartesian duality, between an internal world of mind and consciousness, and an external, physical world which we know about through the senses. Changes happen in our minds also, things appear which we did not create; something must have put them there. They must be very powerful to do such things. Again, it is certain Gods who can become present to our mind. We don't usually decide to lose our temper, it just happens; Ares, the God of War, is around. Experience a sudden sense of directed physical desire and Aphrodite (more like the Goddess of Lust than of Love) has made an appearance.

The Gods are immanent and all around, inside ourselves and out. They are concerned with order. There are rules. It is no accident that we have the same concept - Law - which applies to the human world and the physical. We make legal laws and there are natural laws. In the ancient world this connection is more prominent: we can break the natural laws by our immoral actions. Do wrong things, contrary to the rules of the universe, and the forces of cohesion and order act to insist on conformity and harmony.

So, to take just a single example, Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother. These two actions are contrary to natural moral law. At the beginning of the play 'Oedipus Rex' by Sophocles (1), a priest attends the Court to inform King Oedipus of deep troubles in the city of Thebes, where Oedipus rules. The priest calls this a "tide of death":

Death in the fruitful flowering of her soil
Death in the pastures

Crops are failing, domesticated herds are also dying. Furthermore, there is:

Death in the womb of woman

Oedipus has upset the rightful relationships between father and son, mother and child, and so the processes of the transmission of life are upset and fail. His actions affect nature.

In addition, there is sickness, there is:

pestilence, and fiery demons gripping the city.

Break the rules and the result may be plague.

These things may occur after anyone's bad behaviour, but Oedipus is a King. The effects are worse when rulers break the rules.

Renaissance Europe

The world of Renaissance Europe is, of course, very different. However, some powerful beliefs have some similarity with the cultural features of Ancient Greece.

The Great Plague of London happened in 1665, but serious bouts of plague had been occurring for many years. There was a major plague outbreak in 1592 in London when at least 15,000 people died, about 10% of the population. The pattern continued between those two time dates - 1592 and 1665.

The reaction of people and authorities to the plagues in the 1590s and on into the early 1600s is interesting. Elizabethan England was a time of self-indulgence and pleasure, mostly for those who could afford it. When plagues started to happen regularly people concluded that God was unhappy. Were they taking care of their immortal souls and seeking salvation? No, they were having fun and enjoying themselves. This was contrary to the moral values of God and the purpose of life. The population, and especially the rulers, were being told that their frivolous behaviour was wrong by death arising in unignorable circumstances and numbers.

One of the major reactions in the 17th century was to curb what was thought to be major types of enjoyment. The theatres were closed; not just to prevent people mixing and contaminating each other, but to shift people's practices from personal pleasure to religious seriousness.

It went far beyond curbing a jolly day out at the theatre. The result was the rise of Puritanism. Of course, there were other factors involved in the rise of Puritanism apart from the particular features of it referred to here. But one factor was this sense of fear and guilt because so many people, including rulers, had been living a life of personal, sensuous enjoyment.

This is especially clear in the fashions of the ruler (the queen) and the well off. Just look at the clothes of the upper classes of Elizabethan England. No expense is spared. The approved ways of dressing were fabulously showy and often highly colourful. Compare that to the frequent strict black-and-white only in the clothes of Puritan England just a little later. (Of course, some dressed demurely in Elizabethan times but the trend was avoiding an eye-catching appearance).

The Puritans thought that not only dressing up, but the actual pleasure involved was wrong. Enjoying colour was encouraging selfishness. Personal sensory enjoyment was wrong and was being punished, so the enjoyment of bright colours was contrary to the universal law.

Similarly, diets changed radically. Indulgence in food had been common, wherever it could be afforded, in Elizabethan England. Once Puritanism spread, meals became spartan and simple. It was thought that making tasty sauces to encourage pleasurable eating was wicked. (This attitude carried on in various places for a long time, and includes, eventually, Mr Kellogg in the 20th century looking for a nutritious food that was essentially tasteless).

Imperial China

There is in China the very old concept known as *Tien Ming*. This powerful idea was especially prominent in Ancient and Imperial China, but has never really completely disappeared. It is normally translated as the 'Mandate of Heaven.' This is a huge and complex topic, but simplifying for our purposes here, it functions in two ways. Firstly, there is a force in the functioning of the world such that if a ruler does not obey the intrinsic morals implicit in the very existence of the planet, that person will be overthrown. Similarly, a new possible ruler will have the mandate of heaven with them if they challenge a cosmic law-breaker, and another dynasty will begin.

The signs of the wrong-doing of rulers are apparent to all because the natural world begins to malfunction. There are more natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, heatwaves, and so on. The processes of nature

in its production and increase are affected. Crops fail, there is famine, and there are errors in reproduction in animals and humans. Also in the Chinese tradition, there will be social disorder as the population suffer these consequences. So riots and rebellions arise and spread. People are upset, angry, aggressive, and sporadic, and sometimes organised violence happens. This begins to sound familiar.

A few cautionary remarks

Firstly, the misdemeanours to which these similar conceptions refer are not actions damaging the physical environment. It isn't a matter of felling forests, or polluting rivers, or soiling the air. The wrongdoing involved is acting contrary to what might be regarded as natural relationships with each other, and pursuing personal pleasure rather than more spiritual aims.

Also it is important to realise that what is being referred to here is not a proven phenomenon. The Oedipal story is literature not fact, but it was accepted as a plausible story at the time. Similarly, the Puritan reaction to the repeated rise of serious and fast spreading plague is a belief of what is the cause, not a demonstration of the link. Tien Ming is in the same family of people's convictions of how things work.

However, I find I cannot help but note just how many rulers across the planet seem to acquire that power by decidedly dubious means, and once they have the power live lives of prominent personal pleasure; such a lot of lies, cheating, substance abuse, profiteering and self-indulgence.

And it isn't just political power: it is often true of financial power. How do people make money? What do they do when they get it? Philanthropy still exists, but yachts and planes and parties and drugs seem rife. The function of wealth is to allow people to do what they want, and what they want is to please themselves.

Furthermore, it isn't just the rulers and the wealthy. Over the last fifty years or so there has been a significant change of emphasis in the way we should live our lives. Not everywhere, but in substantial parts of the entire planet, the

concept of duty has almost gone, where individuals feel obliged to fulfil what is considered to be their role, their contribution to society. The word used to be in common use, now it is rarely heard and may even be regarded as a nuisance to be avoided. The word itself has faded. Instead, we have the emphasis on rights. Of course, rights are important and must be maintained, but rights and duties are parallel concepts. If there is a right to freedom of expression (say) then we have a duty to respect that freedom in others (and so on).

Freedom is now frequently central to how life is to be and it is defined as 'doing what you want' - a child's definition. (I would myself define it as something along the lines of 'the ability to do what is best'). What matters so often with the individual is that the desired life is one of personal enjoyment and fun. So - rulers, the wealthy and the general population, at least substantial numbers of them - appear to be shaking the core of these supposed intrinsic values.

So, if there is anything at all in this thought under consideration, what should we expect? Well, anywhere in the world where rulers and the wealthy and many of the general population are seeking their own individual pleasure rather than working for the good of all, there would be manifest consequences.

On the one hand, the processes of the natural world should change and cause injury and even death to people. Things like floods and storms, and earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, chronic and unusual weather changes, and the like. We should expect the very functioning of the natural world in its movements and processes to change and cause destruction. Not only that, but the tradition is that we must suffer the arising and spread of illness. There would be plagues and pandemics. I'm beginning to get nervous.

Healing

If there is any truth in this ancient and recurring belief, what ought we to do to achieve healing? Note first that the very word 'healing' has suffered the change involved in putting the emphasis on individualism.

How is the word 'healing' typically understood? The image and situation most frequently present is likely to be that an individual has some sort of illness or malfunction and another person with suitable training would seek to alleviate the problem or remove it altogether, resulting in better health and a longer life. The word is used with reference to individual well-being, however that is conceived. Something like that is the habitual usage. The emphasis on individualism has got into the concept of healing. It is not typically used with reference to a possible entire culture or way of life being sickly and requiring change to avoid bad consequences.

But what would be needed if this deep concept we are considering has any correct application is more than just personal karma. We would need

to alter our very functioning, individually and socially, so that we cared for the society and how it operates in such a way that we live for a higher purpose, not just ourselves and our own immediate group.

The large scale culture would have to change to heal and the attitudes of those within it. Top to bottom; a huge task.

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When you commit to your own healing journey you help the whole of humanity. The individual and the collective can never be separated...

Of course, some of you will know that you must help in a more dramatic or active way - but self-healing acts for the whole and is not necessarily circumscribed or selfish.

Gildas, quoted in Ruth White, *A Message of Love* (1994) Chapter 7

Finding God?

Steve Petter

We cannot know what God is, but we can know God's effects. My faith says, "... heed the promptings of love and truth in your heart; trust them as the leadings of God..."(1). I am sure God is not that of the Old Testament. Nor do I believe that God is an omnipotent micro-manager. I cannot believe God decides when to organise a tsunami, a holocaust, or a pandemic. I have long felt that God is some impersonal power which nudges or draws us towards goodness. A close metaphor is gravity – a universal force that draws us in one direction, but which can be thwarted.

After many years of meditation, reading, attending courses, and thinking, I thought I'd found God. That is to say, I thought I'd found the source of the experiences which people attribute to a good God. (I'm tempted to digress into consideration of 'good.' Suffice to say "not only ours.")

Combinations of a few simple shapes make up the 26 letters of our alphabet. We then use various arrangements of these letters to form words, then sentences, then essays, books, encyclopaedias. Computers use only two symbols – zero and one – in sequences upon which AI and Big Data depend. Vast quantities of information and meaning are formed from these very few basic shapes. Their meaning is determined not so much by the 'what' of their contents, but by how they are arranged in relation to one another. At an early stage of my thinking it seemed God might be a function of relationship.

I have been meditating for about 50 years with the aim of drawing closer to God, and was pleased when a sage in an Indian ashram in which commonality between Christianity and Hinduism is sought, said that I'd attained Universal Consciousness. But I still hoped to attain 'God Consciousness.' I had also taken an interest in a wide range of topics. My education had culminated in a general degree at the Open University. My knowledge is wide but I admit, shallow. However, I had become aware of DNA.

DNA is an extraordinary molecule. It consists of about 5 billion units, each of which includes one of four basic constituents. These constituents may be arranged in various patterns, sequences – relationships. Sequences of units have specific effects. Sequences in an individual differ very slightly from those of its parents and other members of its species. There are 30 trillion cells in a human body. In almost every cell in a given individual the DNA is the same,

Another input to my thinking was the realisation that all living organisms have a drive to procreate. This seems logically irrefutable since any species which didn't have this impulse would have died out. There has to be also a second urge, and that is to stay alive in order to procreate. This drive emanates from DNA. DNA is not only the blueprint for the organism's physical attributes. It controls the mechanisms by which its blueprint is implemented. It controls by curative and corrective processes, and even by the production of blueprints of future generations. If DNA can cause all living plants and creatures to undertake often bizarre activities in order to mate, could it not have far more complex effects?

Our DNA not only urges us to care for ourselves, but also to feel protective towards our offspring and to a lesser extent to our whole family; and to some extent to our tribe, race, and species. This seems to apply, albeit to an even lesser extent, to other animals and even plants. People who have a Mystic Experience feel in unity with trees.

It occurs to me that, since all of earth's living organisms carry DNA, we each share some form of unity or bond: an innate loving affinity, however subtle, for all other DNA holders. We, survive in the vastness of a dead inorganic universe. The same drive which makes us care for ourselves and our family should make us care for all our fellow DNA-ites.

Just as our religion calls us to make sacrifices for the benefit of fellow humans, so some of us such as plants and animals low in the food chain, are

destined to die for other DNA-ites. We all depend on life forms like plants and phytoplankton which mine the sun's energy.

So I concluded that the many drives we attribute to God – especially love and altruism – were in fact derived from our DNA. DNA was God! God is DNA!

For many months I enjoyed my discovery. My theory was supported frequently by what I encountered in various spiritual, mystical, and religious sources. I won't try and quote the many examples, but I suggest the reader test this hypothesis for a week or so. They might notice how many ethical, spiritual and religious concepts could well be the result of our DNA working in us.

I wanted to discuss my theory with an authoritative theologian or philosopher but could not find the courage to approach any. I refrained from discussing it with colleagues because I did not wish to disturb the religious doctrines which satisfied them.

As I discovered more about DNA, and about cells, and heard of the ADP Engine (a catalytic mechanism in a cell which enables it to absorb energy) – and in particular when I learnt that there are instances when strings of units in DNA have specific effects, like letters forming a

sentence. I began to wonder how that enormous complexity could have evolved. There was the huge jump in complexity from inorganic chemicals to organic, and yet another immense increase in complexity from organic chemicals to living cells. There was also the incredible leap from single cells to complex organisms using sexual reproduction, which cleverly does not produce clones but generates offspring which are not exactly the same as their parents; thus enabling progressive evolution. How could the astonishing DNA sequences responsible for all of this have been programmed by random chance?

I concluded there must have been the equivalent of a programmer – an intelligent designer. Who or what or that was, or how it could work, remained a mystery. I was back to having to accept a supernatural God. The big difference from my original concept was that God was far more mysterious and creative than I had imagined. As someone using Occam's Razor remarked in a recent webinar, a miracle is a simpler hypothesis than the Big Bang.

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<https://qfp.quaker.org.uk>

In addition to its many religious forms, Healing also includes many arts and sciences. There is the art of listening, the art of smiling, the art of empathy, of knowing just what people need, and not rushing in to offer help that is not suitable. Then there is the healing that comes through prayer in its various forms, through the laying on of hands, through music and dance, painting and colour, through communion with and understanding of the world of nature, and through friendship.

Jim Pym, 1990, quoted in *Quaker Faith and Practice* (5th edition)
Chapter 21

Towards inner peace: a personal journey

Matthew Colquhoun

I have found inner peace can be hard to achieve – it's a personal journey. On 11th July 1999 I had an unusual (perhaps, religious) experience in a church, which I thought would help create some peace in me. However, following this religious experience (my assumption), I found myself with 5 problems: 'aches / headache', 'communication issues', a 'dark night of the soul', 'psychological issues' and 'disbelief from people' – I suffered a lot, but some good things happened too.

In 2018 I became a member of the Alister Hardy Trust and wrote an account about my religious experience for the archive. I was invited to online events with the Alister Hardy Trust, but no researchers showed interest in my specific experiences. I am aware that I might not be believed about my religious experience. However, I have done my best to make sense of my experiences in the framework of my Christian faith.

In a 'stormy sea' (a metaphor) I have found that there is some evidence that good things can surface ('fruit of the Holy Spirit' – e.g. love, joy, peace) downstream of religious experiences (after you've had a chance to understand them a little). I think some of this 'fruit of the Holy Spirit' emerged in my life in the following ways:

- In 2000 I had useful conversations with an NHS doctor (I have health issues) who encouraged me to pursue my dream of

studying an MA in development training. I actually failed the MA, but I went to see an inspirational NHS chaplaincy afterwards – which eventually took me to church to learn about how forgiveness can help release emotions and lead to 'love' and 'joy'.

- In 2014 I became an accepted member/facilitator of a group at a local recovery college for NHS patients who have unusual experiences (this group also assisted local universities with their research). Over three years I developed some 'inner peace' from processing my experiences and being recognised as a useful point of learning.

In later years I have experienced the disabling effect of having few people to talk to who have specific knowledge about religious experience. I think the Alister Hardy Trust should be looking more into digital health innovations as a way to improve health outcomes of people who experience religious experience (user-friendly digital health can speed up learning and help people socialise). I hope digital health will also lead to improved data collection for researchers of religious experience.

If anyone is interested in getting in touch, I can be contacted using email – see below.

Matthew Colquhoun is a Mechanical Engineer. He lives in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. mpc1971@hotmail.com

This process of accepting, letting go, learning, growing and then throwing off the illness may be one you only have to go through once, or, if you have a lot to learn, you may go through it - up and down - many times.

Don't be afraid. It is not difficult. It is not dangerous. While the thought of whatever darkness is disturbing you may seem terrifying now, it is nothing you cannot handle. Each one of us is born on this planet as a soul wanting to grow further towards the Divine Light. We are never given more than we can handle on the journey towards greater understanding and perfection.

Tessa Goldhawk, *A Rose to a Sick Friend* (1989)

The reception of plainchant

A musical, psychological, and theological exploration

Congratulations to the Revd Bernard Salter on being made a Doctor of Philosophy by the University of Durham. Bernard (now in his 80th year) is a regular reader of De Numine. We asked him to give an outline of his doctoral work.



My thesis describes an exercise in Qualitative Research, and explores the reception of plainchant through the minds of 30 participants and other informants. Before doing this research, I didn't really

understand what 'reception' means in an academic context. It's used in literary studies to refer to the way in which the 'meaning' of a work can change depending on how it is 'received' by readers, and the same is true in music, where there is an additional element, namely the quality of performance, and perhaps of recordings. I have been fascinated by 'music and spirituality' for a long time, and being accepted by Durham's Music Department for this work gave me the opportunity to plumb these depths more fully.

Plainchant is a genre of music which (perhaps more than any other) has the capacity to 'speak' to people of transcendent realities. So, having recruited my participants, I sent them three tracks of recorded plainchant and asked them to comment on them in a structured way. My other informants (published writers and professional exponents of plainchant) gave their views more generally, with reference to specific chants of their own choosing. In the thesis I stress the primary point that the 'ancestral home' of plainchant is the Christian Church; it was therefore to be expected that the emphases would be both musical and theological. There is also the psychological element, which required a great deal of additional reading. Everyone seems to agree that music generates emotions, but there are many different theories as to how this works. I reflected on this conundrum, but did not try to solve it!

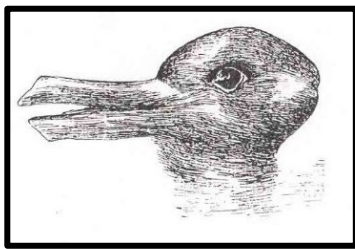
My research method was 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' (IPA), and the thesis is structured in such a way as to reveal the views of my participants and others in respect of (a) memory – the way in which this music takes them 'back' in time through their own memories and to a sense of the long history of the Church; (b) serenity (a word used by more than one participant) signifying the sense of 'inner calm' generated by the music; and (c) transcendence – the way in which this kind of music evokes in some people the awareness of a 'higher reality', and seems to take them 'beyond the confines of daily life'. Reference is made to the 'double hermeneutic' which this type of research entails, as I (the researcher) seek to make sense of the way in which the participants and others make sense of the phenomenon of plainchant. Reference is also made to the notion of 'invitational rhetoric', as I (the writer) invite the reader to enter into the minds of the participants and others, and to see the phenomenon of plainchant as they see it – or, rather, to hear it as they hear it.

Throughout the discussion there are numerous references to the philosophy of music, its links with theology, with emotions and even with cognitive science. My conclusion focusses on the wise words of one informant about 'the life of the Spirit', and also takes up references (found at various earlier points) to one particular chant known as *Tonus Peregrinus* (the 'wandering tone'): recent work has indicated a possible Hebrew origin for this tone; but the element of 'peregrination' is also present in the thesis itself, as I try to draw together the various strands of thought presented by my participants and informants, which lead us at some points well beyond the areas which might be expected, including mention of quantum physics and comments about 'the nature of time'. Further work is clearly needed to develop these links in more detail.

The reception of plainchant has proved to be a mine of unexpected treasures. My wording at times might seem florid – I was criticized for this

by one of my supervisors, but I provided a justification: that music is an art with strong links to poetry and the visual arts; music also depends a good deal on repetition (as poetry sometimes does); and so, 'melismatic' (rather than 'minimalist') language seemed to me to be entirely appropriate in this context.

When puzzling over the 'conundrum' described above, Ludwig Wittgenstein came to my aid with the famous picture of the 'duck-rabbit'. It has been reported that when children were confronted with this image, if the time of year was near to Easter, they were more likely to



perceive a rabbit; in October they tended rather to see a duck or some other bird. Let us suppose that one person (be it child or

adult) says first of all, 'I see a duck', and another person says, 'I see a rabbit'; but then the first person says 'Oh yes, I can see the rabbit too. Can you see the duck?' This is a good example of 'invitational rhetoric'. But it might be that the second person is adamant (especially if it's Easter Day) and says, 'No, it's just a rabbit'. This is when the rhetoric could become over-persuasive, or even abusive. On the other hand, the second person might experience a 'light-bulb' moment, and see the duck as well. Or they might refer to a third person, and see if there is any 'weight' attaching to one perception or the other. Throughout this exchange, the drawing (in the external world) has remained the same, but the picture (in the mind of the observers) may well have changed from a rabbit to a duck, and back again.

With perceptions of 'emotions in music' the process is more complex. In the case of 'martial music' (for example) one listener may feel that a sense of patriotism is aroused, as a result of a mental picture of soldiers marching; another may feel a sense of despair at the wastage of lives (particularly young lives) which occurs when battles are fought – an entirely different picture. It might be possible for the two listeners to explain to each other why they feel the way

they do, and this kind of invitational rhetoric might lead to mutual understanding. But it is equally possible that they will have to 'agree to differ', respecting each other's subjectivity and autonomy.

The whole issue of subjectivity is very relevant when dealing with emotions in music, and also with religious beliefs. Another interesting illustration (published in a scientific journal) refers to subjectivity as 'the elephant in the room' and quotes an 'ancient fable' in which ...

... six blind men went out to use their sense of touch to investigate the nature of an elephant, something they had never heard of. Each man touched a different part of the creature. One perceived the elephant to be a wall (side), another one was sure to be touching a snake (trunk) and the third one was convinced that he had just put his hands on a tree (leg). The other three were touching the elephant's tusk, ear and tail and again came to a different conclusion regarding the nature of the elephant.

This illustrates the danger of relying too much on one's own perceptions as a guide to what might be 'absolute truth'. It is important to understand 'how [different people] feel and think the way they do, but more importantly why there might exist multiple divergent views' on any specific topic, whether it be (for example) the nature of an elephant or the emotional and theological value of plainchant.

The examiners told me that they found my writing very 'readable' – unlike some theses, they said, which are 'dry and dusty'. My work will soon be available in the archives of Durham University: see <https://etheses.dur.ac.uk/> but if you, dear Reader of *De Numine*, would like a copy, you are most welcome – just email me at bernardsalter123@gmail.com and I will send you the pdf version, complete with all the scholarly footnotes and details of the three tracks.

Revd Bernard Salter

bernardsalter123@gmail.com

EXPERIENCES

“Almost” Mystical Experience

Dr Ken R Vincent (1943 - 2024)



Ranch House, Spofford, Texas

When I was about 11 years old and spending part of my summer vacation at my family’s working ranch in Spofford, Texas, I had an “almost” mystical experience that has stayed with me for 70 years.

In the late afternoon when the blazing Texas heat had subsided a bit, my three spinster aunts and I were sitting on two enormous swings on the front porch of our ranch house. To the left of us was a car kicking up dust on the gravel road nearby.

Suddenly, the whole scene turned brilliant. I was surrounded by love of my aunts for each other and me and my love for them. I thought to myself, “This is such a wonderful moment, but I

am young and will be going on to bigger and better things.” Little did I realize that this would be one of the most precious moments in my entire life.

I have often wondered that, if I had not curtailed that moment with a vague idea of the future, would I have had a “full-blown” mystical experience? I have remembered that moment all my life, and its memory has not faded over time.

How often do all of us stand on the verge of ecstasy until something interrupts us to break the spell? Are these “almost” mystical experiences worth studying, or just personal moments?

Energy perception

Billie Krstovic

I don't know what it is about washing up... There seems to be something about making order that settles the mind into a different perception, as my husband nonchalantly noted. It seems so simple an idea but truly a plausible one.

I have been working with healing energies for some years now and whenever I think about how that came about it makes me wonder what happened. I was a sickly child with extrasensory perceptions ever since I could remember. I never knew that these perceptions were not normal. They were just there, as was breathing and walking. I never knew anything different and neither did I think much about it.

As I was growing up I gave into this completely, doing three hours of yoga daily (while still partying and going out with my friends as every teenager did) and at some point ended up in a residential Yoga venue in Switzerland, at the age of 23. Sporting high heels and short skirts (among fields and cows in the middle of the Alps above Lake Lucerne!) I still only saw this as nothing more than an episode in my busy life.

One day, while washing up, I was talking to a monk about coherence of the mind (as you do) while he was making some tea in the kitchen. He was explaining how the mind, if coherent, can penetrate matter and change the course of events. How it was really, just a matter of being in tune with the Unified Field of everything.

That just happened to be a morning after an evening when I'd overheard someone speaking not too flatteringly about me and was not feeling all that coherent myself. In fact, I was rather angry. As he was speaking, I interrupted and said that coherence was not high on my menu that day as I was in a bit of a bad mood. I said this while polishing a wine glass in my hand. He was intrigued and asked me why, what was happening? While lifting the glass to

a ray of sunshine to check my handiwork I said: '(so and so) is such a cow!' with some zest in my voice. At that moment the top of the glass shattered in mid-air. I was stunned and while checking that some of it had not ended up in my hair I could hear the monk laughing loudly behind me. By the time I looked at him he was bent over the kitchen table laughing. He said: You seem to be coherent today! I was surprised and did not get this at first, then it dawned on to me what he was talking about. We were laughing together for a moment. I was no longer angry.

As I was calmly explaining what happened the night before I remembered he had told me that some people were going to Lucerne (which was an hour in the car down the mountain) and wanted to know who that was and whether they had already left. There was only a small village shop nearby and after two months in the retreat I was fed up with everything they had there. I wanted some proper chocolate from town. I asked him about this and as we chatted about good places to shop, chocolates and restaurants, the kitchen door suddenly opened and the head of another monk popped through. He said: 'Do you know anyone who wants a box of chocolate? I ordered some as a gift and they were awful. I complained and they sent me so many that now I have a box of better ones to give away.' The other monk and I just looked at each other and burst into the biggest belly laugh. We could not stop. The guy at the door walked in with his rather large brown box and was very patiently waiting for us to stop, amused and completely puzzled. Eventually my monk said "She'll have the chocolates." Then we burst out laughing again. It took a while before we could explain what was happening. As they left the kitchen they nodded their heads - 'Coherent today, you are indeed...', still smirking.

Fast forward five years, and I was washing up again, this time in my small studio in Windsor. Paintings and brushes were strewn

everywhere around the room and I was on a mission to tidy up. I was washing up; calm but in action mode.

I was just standing there going through the motions when suddenly I had a very clear picture of my dad in my mind. I could see him but also I could see another layer around his body. His body was enclosed by a grey smoke-like substance. I was observing this as if he was right there in front of me, just not with my actual eyes. I just 'saw' a different version of him. While continuing to wash up I was scanning this picture, as if two worlds were running parallel to each other in time and space without disturbing each other. I looked at his chest and there were dark dense patches of thick smoke. My attention was drawn to his throat. There I saw metal needles and right in the middle a lead-like ball. I did not know what I was observing as it had never happened before. My father was thousands of miles away in Eastern Europe and I had no idea how he 'popped into' my awareness in this way. I had not spoken to him in a couple of months and had no idea whether anything was going on with his throat. I did not know what any of it meant or what I should do with it. On the periphery of my mind I was disturbed by the whole thing.

This vision lasted a while and I was getting greater insights by the minute. By the end of it I decided to call my sister. I asked her to tell dad (who had no phone where he was at the time) to go to the doctor's and check his throat. She wanted to know why I was making this request and I could not tell her.

My sister is nothing like me as I learned growing up, and moreover she was very frightened of anything outside of ordinary perceptions. I spent years hiding this kind of stuff from her, and eventually from almost everyone. I realised that people understood

these things even less than I did. I learned that this could frighten them and make them think things about me that I did not like. So, I decided to just say I had a bad dream, could not stop thinking about it and that she should do it to calm my worries.

A week later she phoned to tell me that dad refused to go to the doctor's but a few days later he became very ill with a horrible cough. At this point he did go to the doctor's and the diagnoses were not good. His throat was not in a good place and sadly it never got better.

That was many years ago now. My dad is no longer here and I still miss him. I suppose this was a gift from him. This episode was the start of a long line of intense energy training for me, by visible and invisible teachers. Nowadays, I work with this perception on my clients. I am no longer frightened of it as I was back then. It is not to say that it is always pleasant. I have however, learned to move the energy and bring a new, fresh one in while working on others.

I learned to listen for notes in energy quality and bring harmony to the system. I am still learning, with every new energy body I perceive. I have also learned that we humans have perhaps forgotten something very important about ourselves. We forgot that medicine is not in the bottle but in us, in nature and in the universe. We forgot that we indeed can tune in and make ourselves coherent with everything there is, all of us. It's just a matter of letting it happen.

Happy Birthday, dad, and thank you for making me remember this...

Billie Krstovic MCHP is a Vibrational Medicine practitioner, published author, meditation teacher and energy work teacher. For more information go to www.mindfulnessconcept.com

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

My involvement with AHT began in 1985 when RERC, as it was then known, was brought to my notice. I had, at the time, received a small legacy which enabled me to become a Life Member. I really had no idea why this action was being taken; it was only intuition which is still my reliable Guide.

In November 1984 I had attended a newly formed Meditation Group within a Cancer Support Organisation. Only one other person and the lady taking the group were present. Toward the end of the meditation, I felt something touch my heart; a warm glow passed through my body, leaving a sense of release and peace. My mind seemed like scattered jigsaw pieces suddenly falling into place. I had been spiritually healed. One

consequence of this life-changing experience was my initial contact with AHT.

It was only a few years ago that, with the help of the much missed John Franklin, I submitted a spiritual biography to the AHT Archives. It seemed important to record details of some of the significant spiritual experiences which have occurred during my life on earth.

I believe the research work being carried out by The Trust is vital in helping to heal our troubled world. A spiritual revolution seems the only possible solution.

Anne Drysdale, Largs, Ayrshire

Because there's no rule book for mystery illness, there are also no limits to recovery... Healing is one of the greatest freedoms God offers us. Healing is the law of the universe, the light, or whatever you choose to call the higher source – not the law of humans – and so it grants true justice. Untethered by statute, healing from mystery illness can exceed imagination.

Anthony William, *Medical Medium* (2005) Chapter 2

OBITUARIES

Dr Ken R Vincent (20 August 1943 to 11 June 2024)

Dr Kenneth Ray Vincent was born in El Paso, Texas, on 8-20-43 to William Bell Vincent and Virginia LaVerne Parten Vincent. His family moved to San Antonio in 1945 and lived there until 1959 when they moved to Houston. He earned a B.Sc. in Psychology and M.Ed. in Counseling from the University of Houston and an Ed.D in Counselling Psychology from the University of Northern Colorado (1973).

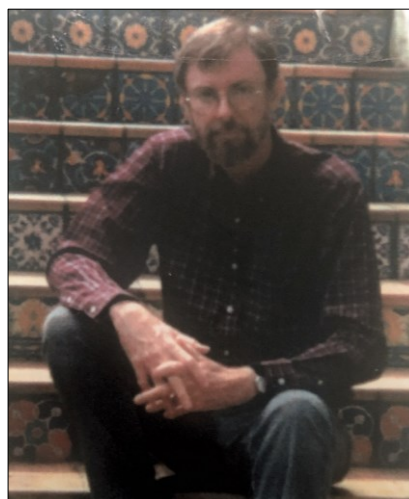
Ken had three careers in psychology --- first as counsellor in the War on Poverty programs of the Kennedy/Johnson administrations, second as psychologist at the Texas Rehabilitation Commission and the Hauser Psychiatry and Neurology Clinic, and third as professor in the Educational Psychology Dept. at the University of Houston and Houston Community College.

Concurrent with his career in psychology and continuing after his retirement in 2001, Ken pursued an avocational career as writer and religious/spiritual experience researcher. He was active in the Forum for Interreligious Understanding and Foundation for Contemporary Theology; he served as webmaster for the *Universalist Herald*.

Ken's popular books include: *Visions of God from the Near-Death Experience*, *The Magi: From Zoroaster to the Three Wise Men*, and *The Golden Thread: God's Promise of Universal Salvation*. His online book, *God Is With Us*:

What Near-Death and Other Spiritually Transformative Experiences Teach Us About God and Afterlife was published in soft-cover in 2019. He married the love of his life Pam in 1993 who became his best friend and first editor.

Ken is survived by wife Pam, son Dr Kenneth Rumsey Vincent, daughter-in-law Dr Virginia Vincent, grandsons Christopher and Charles Vincent, and stepson Dr Clark Sitton and his family.



...then I asked, "Does this mean that humankind will be saved?" Like a trumpet blast with a shower of spiralling lights, the Great Light spoke, saying: "Remember this and never forget: you save, redeem and heal yourself. You always have. You always will. You were created with the power to do so from before the beginning of the world."

<https://near-death.com/mellen-thomas-benedict/>

POETRY

One drop contains the ocean

There is mystery in the immensity of the night sky,
In the wonder of the stars shining,
for they are shining in the depth of your being.
There is a universe in a single flower.
You can hear a timeless melody in a sacred sound
beyond the dullness of our human hearing.
You can feel the sacred presence, and shout its praise,
touch a thousand faces of the gods, and live.

Kneel in awe at the wild power that births our world,
that unties the tangled web of our confused humanity,
frees us from the chains that bind us to mortality.
This the alchemy that makes us smile,
moves us beyond the pain that weighs upon our years,
heals the broken fragments of our torn humanity,
stills the fretful storms of life,
and calms the winds.

The wolf bays at the moon
and the swallow returns to find her nesting place.
They breathe life's gift, and drink from nature's bounty.
One drop contains the all, from ocean's gift of life,
one sweet drop connects us to the whole,
a greater life, a greater love, soul within a greater soul,
one drop, and yet the all,
the fount of all eternity.

Jonathan Robinson



New worlds between

by Geoff Hammond

The poem below was my attempt in simple words to describe my out-of-body experiences, of which I have had hundreds. I shared some of my experiences with Ann Wetherall in her research before we discussed the idea and launch of the Ashram Project, which later changed to the Prison Phoenix Trust.

There is a world when half asleep
between the shallow and the deep
when bodies paralyze,
and souls depart.

And if you can control your mind
your spirit frees and you will find
new worlds between
the beating of your heart.

geoffhammondwarden@gmail.com

Heather

by Dennis Evans

A channel,
she deals with the invisible
made visible.

She has a lightness of touch
imbued with kindness.

Gentle-breasted,
lightly laughing,
her shyness is contained.
Slender as a Willow,
she knows about silence.

When to speak,
when not to speak.

She has the authority
of those who know:
her connection with God.



© Dennis Evans FRSA

The following is not strictly a poem, but does not fit elsewhere in our issue (Ed)

I am Yeshua

I am lost in translation

'traduttore traditore'

I am Yeshua, born in Galilee.

The language of my home is Aramaic.

My parents are Joseph and Mary.

I have four brothers, James, Joseph, Judas and Simon, and two sisters as well.

I am a Jew.

I am a carpenter in the village of Nazareth.

I am not married.

I am a man of place, a countryman who shuns cities.

I have never been to the capital city of Galilee, Sepphoris, which is a few miles from Nazareth. I have hardly ever left Galilee, going no further than Tyre and Sidon, Caesarea Philippi, and parts of Jordan.

For thirty years I am unknown.

When I am thirty-three years old, I answer John the Baptist's appeal to baptism and repentance.

I remain with John until he is imprisoned by Herod Antipas.

I then renew John's mission in Galilee.

I invite all those who listen to believe in my healing power as a man of God. Those who have this faith can recover from ill-health and disability.

I heal through touch and verbal command.

For me, illness and sin are caused by evil spirits. My healing brings together exorcism with the forgiveness of sins.

I gain my spiritual authority from my actions.

I am not the only charismatic teacher-healer of my region and time. Honi and Hanina ben Dosa are both renowned and much sought after.

I cherish children, the sick and the despised.

When John asks if I am the Messiah, I point to the events surrounding me: the blind see; the deaf hear; the lame walk; lepers are healed.

When others ask me the same question: 'Are you the Messiah?'. I answer: 'You have said so' and 'You say that I am.'

Others know me as 'a wise man and a performer of astonishing or paradoxical deeds' and 'the prophet Yeshua from Nazareth in Galilee'.

I preach in village synagogues by the Lake of Galilee. My message is to Aramaic speaking Galilean Jews.

Twelve apostles, mainly local fishermen, follow me and I have a small group of seventy disciples.

I do not intend to start a new religion.

I am not a political revolutionary.

For me, the present always overshadows the future; there is not enough time to establish a church.

What distinguishes me from other holy men is the simple beauty and magnetism of my message.

I captivate those who listen to me.

I prefer poetry to abstract ideas.

I do not try to describe the Kingdom of God. I compare-it to:

a rich harvest

a tiny mustard seed mysteriously growing into a tall shrub

the leaven which turns flour into bread

I say the return of a stray lamb to the sheepfold and the repentance of a tax-collector or a harlot causes more joy in heaven than the routine virtue of 99 'just' men.

I am urgent, enthusiastic, compassionate and loving.

I go to Jerusalem once.

I do not return from there.

I do the wrong thing in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I am executed on a Roman cross by the Governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, who executes and massacres Jews and Samaritans.

I make such a deep impression on my followers that my death does not end my presence in their lives.

They feel compelled to carry on my mission as healers, exorcists and preachers of the Kingdom of God.

My followers love me and see their success as healers as proof that I am alive in and through them.

I am resurrected in their hearts.

And so...

I live on.

* * *

Afterword: explanatory note

This 'autobiography' of less than a thousand words is based on the verifiable evidence gathered by the Jewish historian Geza Vermes, particularly in his *The Real Jesus Then and Now* of 2010. Geza Vermes has studied the Dead Sea Scrolls, early rabbinic literature, the Jewish historian Joseph Flavius (37-c.100 AD), and the earliest gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke written 70-100 years after Yeshua's death. This gathering of facts from sources in these decades precedes translations into Greek and interpretations undertaken by the first Christian

priests. My distillation of Vermes here is especially supported by Stevan L. Davies' book *Jesus the Healer* (London, 1995).

I decided to use the first-person singular in the present tense (happily living without a 'Jesus Complex') to bring to life, in this moment, the utter simplicity of the facts available.

Terry McCormick, 5th October 2024

All comments, queries, challenges welcomed by Terry McCormick: terry.mccormick@cantab.net

BOOK REVIEWS

Saucers: Tracing the Origins of Disc-Shaped UFOs by Chris Aubeck. Amazon, 2023, ISBN: 9798862476095. 409 pp.

Mark Fox

There's a view of religious, spiritual - and, by extension, anomalous - experiencing that has been around for nigh-on fifty years and which goes by various names. Of these names, *constructivism* is one. In essence, constructivists claim that experiences such as those undergone by mystics are not just shaped by language, culture, and expectation but somehow created - or *constructed* - by these things. It's a popular view, particularly within academia where it sits comfortably within a prevailing ethos that often champions both diversity and variety of experience (it tends to rule out 'common core' theories of various 'types' of religious experience, for example) and a reductionistic view of anything 'supernatural' or 'anomalous.'

I thought of the constructivist attitude to anomalous phenomena throughout my reading of Chris Aubeck's *Saucers*. Specifically: of whether or not his thesis throughout this book lent support to the view or not. And herein hangs a tale...

In fact, there really is no way to review Aubeck's fascinating study without providing the story with which it begins. Which, in essence, is this: on June 24th 1947, businessman and aviator Kenneth Arnold was flying his CallAir A-2 aeroplane near Mount Rainier, Washington. At approximately 10,000 feet he saw nine shining objects moving erratically between the mountain peaks, estimating their velocity at an incredible 1,700 miles per hour. The objects were nothing he could identify and reading his earliest accounts of his curious aerial 'encounter' gives the distinct impression that he was troubled by what he saw: not least because the 'craft' had no tails and resembled nothing he'd ever seen. Once landed in Yakima he related what he'd observed to a friend and the story quickly reached the press. Somehow - and in a crucial sense this is the essence of the book - the phrase 'flying saucer' found its way into the

ensuing press furoré and the term itself was born.

Except, as Aubeck shows, the process wasn't anywhere near as straightforward as this and as he attempts to peel back the layers underlying the origin and rapid spread of 'flying saucer' we discover not what Arnold saw - it doesn't really seem possible to do this - but, rather, where the term was actually 'birthed' and why it came to proliferate so quickly and so widely. In fact, towards the middle of the book there's a real surprise regarding the origin of the term which we'll come to shortly.



Aubeck leaves the reader in little doubt that Arnold's sighting, and its immediate aftermath, did much to lead to the ubiquity of the term 'flying saucer.' But pre-1947, he asserts, the saucer *shape* of UFOs was more-or-less non-existent and post-1980 has appeared in only 5.9% of sighting reports to date: a percentage surpassed by lights, circles, triangles, fireballs, 'unknown' and 'other.' Various databases are presented and analysed to demonstrate this, including one which currently houses no fewer

than 146,000 reports. Hence, it seems, 'flying saucer' as a descriptor appeared relatively late on the UFO 'scene', shone brightly for a few decades, and had pretty much gone by 1980. 'To put it into perspective,' writes Aubeck, 'that's shorter than the music career of the Rolling Stones to date.'

Conventional UFOlogical wisdom has long had it that 'flying saucer' arose because a journalist misheard (or misquoted) Arnold: that Arnold was denoting motion when he used 'saucer' - as in a saucer's motion when it skips, stone-like, across water - but that this became later transmuted into a description of the objects' *shapes*. Hence the term's origin was in a kind of 'error' which then dictated the detail - certainly the shape - of subsequently-sighted UFOs. Aubeck's book shows this to be something of a simplification and herein lies its big surprise. For as the author demonstrates convincingly and at length, 'flying saucer', in fact, originated in the 1880s as a term to denote the small circular targets used in trap and clay pigeon shooting. By 1900 the term had spread and it continued to do so right up to the late 1930s and early 40s when shooting sports were suspended. Yet even here the descriptor showed resilience: the term being used to denote the targets used for gunnery practice during the war. Only by the mid-1950s did it stop being used within the shooting context, and this because its meaning had been transferred to the rapidly-proliferating body of UFO reports.

In parallel with this process of descriptor 'evolution', the early decades of the twentieth century saw a rapid permeation of popular culture by disc-shaped, unusual, craft: most markedly in novels, short stories, 'pulp' magazines and other sources of speculative fiction. Further, and as part of this, crucial additional UFO *motifs* from within later flying saucer lore such as trips through space and encounters with aliens featured prominently.

In sum: fiction preceded fact. As Aubeck asserts:

'For those interested in the history of UFOs, this continuity between speculative fiction and later eyewitness testimony should prove thought-provoking. It's like a chicken-and-egg

situation, except in this case we know which came first.'

There's more to Aubeck's book even than this but you get the gist. It's not about whether or not these craft actually exist, or even about what Arnold saw. Instead, it's all about... well, the taking shape of a *shape*. And herein lies the constructivist rub. Because, in ways analogous to those of the constructivists before him, Aubeck too seems to be arguing strongly that cultural-linguistic expectation did more than simply shape a pre-existing, pre-linguistic phenomenon. Instead it went *further* than this. So, as regards the preponderance of disc-shaped craft in the various forms of popular Western speculative fiction of the early twentieth-century, he writes: 'There was no precedent for the phenomena they portrayed.' In other words: popular culture *created* the flying saucer. Or constructed it, if you prefer. *Ex nihilo*.

Aubeck provides copious illustrations throughout this extremely well-produced book as he sets about proving his points. This is necessary because flying saucers were quintessentially visual phenomena but it also serves to reinforce those self-same points. It's one thing to be told that 'flying saucers' as a term existed before late-June 1947, quite another to be shown page after page of actual headlines spanning several decades prior to this which absolutely prove it.

Succour for constructivists, then? Support from a most unlikely quarter? Well, not quite. Taken on its own merits, *Saucers* makes a compelling case: at least in places. But it raises crucial questions whilst begging a fair few also. On the one hand, it appears that in the case of flying saucers expectation created at least one crucial detail of experience: *shape*. Not in Arnold's own case, however. He drew something akin to a bat or boomerang shape and steadfastly denied that he'd seen saucer shapes thereafter. UFOlogical history also shows that by the 1990s flying *triangles* were being sighted in considerable numbers: particularly in Europe. Might this morph from saucer shape to triangle shape provide a good way of testing Aubeck's contentions in *Saucers*? On the surface at least, it is not clear that triangles had assumed

anything like the potency or ubiquity as a pre-internet 'meme' by the 1990s comparable to that of saucers by the late-1940s. There is at the very least the opportunity for a 'test' study here.

I was also struck throughout my reading of *Saucers* by the overall complexity of Aubeck's analysis. It might be argued that this was necessitated because societal and cultural processes are themselves complex. However, those committed to the use of Occam's Razor for the understanding of anomalous phenomena might want to point to something simpler: that the objects *themselves*, perhaps, might have undergone a process of willed and deliberate shapeshifting. Much is made in some quarters of the tricksterish nature of many Fortean phenomena and, as is commonly acknowledged, tricksters are shapeshifters *par excellence*. Might we be being presented with another example of their wily ways here?

Finally, and regardless of how Aubeck's conclusions might be viewed, even the briefest examination of the Ufological literature as it has unfolded over many decades reveals the inescapable fact that *something* has been repeatedly seen by witnesses: in many cases something with no discernible conventional

explanation. Cultural-linguistic expectation might indeed 'clothe' this. But it surely doesn't entirely *create* it. Particularly in that significant number of high strangeness cases where, having no concepts whatsoever on which to 'hang' their experiences, subjects actually do *not* know what it is that they have encountered - often experiencing extreme anxiety as a result. The October 1973 Pascagoula 'abduction' is a case in point but examples are legion.

The constructivist hypothesis with regard to religious and spiritual experiencing might well go further than Aubeck goes in the case of UFOs in *Saucers*. But the potential for the application of his analysis to the very different realm of religious and spiritual experience is at least theoretically there. As above, so within, perhaps. Regardless: those seeking to build bridges between the wide variety of phenomena within the equally wide field of anomalistics might well find much to ponder in Aubeck's excellent work.

Mark Fox is a freelance researcher and writer and a member of the Alister Hardy Society. You can find him at www.markfox.co.uk

*And now call on the Love Ray and send it out over this sad Dark Star,
and let the love of the Most High drench and purify every darkest
corner of the Earth plane. Let the light from the Holy of Holies shine
forth in brilliance. Let fear stumble and die. Let hope rise triumphant.
Let hatred fade away in the blinding glory of His everlasting day, and
in His keeping may we walk in peace. Amen.*

As communicated to Lord Hugh Dowding in *The Dark Star*,
White Crow Books (2013)

NOTICES and ADVERTISEMENTS

AUTUMN CONFERENCE RECORDINGS

Saturday 26 October 2024

The Environment, Spiritual Experience and Wellbeing

Recordings are available online for the presentations listed below. All three speakers are contributors to the forthcoming volume, *Environmental Spirituality and Wellbeing*, to be published by Equinox in June 2025. If you did not receive the email and links, please contact admin@alisterhardytrust.org

- The Alister Hardy Memorial Lecture
Where three strands meet: spiritual experience, psychotherapy and the environment by Revd Dr Jeff Leonardi
- Wellbeing is the feeling of being 'one with the world and my surroundings': reflections on the environmental dimension of wellbeing in Brazil by Prof Bettina Schmidt
- The gift of spiritual relationship: a person-centred approach to wholeness in Julian of Norwich by Revd Dr Robert Fruehwirth
- Reflections at the end of the presentations by Jeff Leonardi, Bettina Schmidt and Robert Fruehwirth. Introduced by Leslie Francis

WANTED

Completing the Sheepfold

Could you help as an editor/critical reader of a spiritual odyssey memoir which I have recently completed? You need to be at home with spiritual journeying and have a developed literary sense of what works for a reader in both prose and poetry.

The story is one of extreme human challenges which, eventually, are a catalyst for a breakthrough into creation. Currently, the length of

this text is 150 A4 pages; c.43,500 words.

If you are interested and have the background for this work, please do make contact and we can arrange an informal chat.

Fee to be agreed.

Contact: Dr Terry McCormick
terry.mccormick@cantab.net
07716 287 999

COURSES

Life, Death and Afterlife

Monday 23rd – Friday 27th June 2025

Quakers have collected convincing evidence of what happens at death and before we arrive on earth. We'll explore personal testimony in the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies anthology, *The Life That Never Ends*, and share accounts from other times and texts, including research. Grasmere provides a beautiful setting to explore a great theme. Led by Rhonda Riachi.

Glenthorne Quaker Centre & Guest House, Grasmere, Ambleside LA22 9QH.
Contact info@glenthorne.org Tel: 015394 35389

INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Members, researchers, writers and supporters are encouraged to submit items for publication. Please observe the following guidelines.

Copy deadlines:

Spring issue: 28th February

Autumn issue: 31st August

Submit contributions by email (as an unformatted attachment) to the Editor: **denumine@gmail.com**

- **Articles:** max 2,000 words
- **Book reviews:** max 1,000 words
- **Event reports:** max 500 words

If these limits are exceeded, the contribution may be sent back for editing by the author before it can be accepted.

References: please **do not insert endnotes or footnotes**, but mark reference numbers in the text, and give a correspondingly numbered list of references after the text. Include author, date, title, place of publication, publisher, and page numbers.

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

Book reviews: please give the **author, title, place of publication, publisher, date, number of pages, ISBN no. and price** at the top of the review.

Letters, accounts of personal experiences, poems, images, etc., are always welcome.

At the end of the text give your full name, and brief biographical details and e-mail address if you wish.

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

Review copies of De Numine: contact **denumine@gmail.com**



The illustration on the front cover is taken from the Megalithic Spirals in the Inner chamber of Newgrange, Stone C10. Newgrange is an ancient site in the Boyne Valley, to the north of Dublin, Ireland.

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