

# Sea of Faith

Exploring Values, Spirituality and Meaning

[www.sof.org.nz](http://www.sof.org.nz)

Newsletter 112, June 2014

SO F CONFERENCE 2014

## EXPLORING INNER SPACE

**CAN SPIRIT, SOUL AND FREE-WILL SURVIVE THE SCRUTINY?**

All of the major paths of faith came to birth long before the revolutionary discoveries that comprise our contemporary world were made. *Such discoveries proved to be disruptive and strongly challenging to earlier world-views as well as to the tenets of specific religious faiths.* With the rise of psychology in the 19th and 20th centuries and of mind-body research (often called neuroscience) of today, the findings of such disciplines are proving to be at least as challenging as was Darwin's account of human development in the mid-19th century.

Just as Galileo's adoption, four centuries ago, of a sun-centred system clashed with the assumptions of theologians of the day and just as Darwin's account of human origins is still rejected by many religious systems, so today the consequences of discoveries in psychology, medicine and neuroscience present hurdles—thought by some to be insurmountable—to traditional notions of 'spirit', 'soul' and 'freewill'.

*Does neuroscience explain away religious experience? What is really going on in our "inner space"? Where do our convictions and attitudes come from?*

What must now be done? Some might ignore these scientific developments while others would reject some or all religious ideas and practices. Our Conference speakers will address those who would draw on our new-found knowledge of what it is to be human and adapt current norms to embrace that new knowledge.

*In the light of the revolution in psychology and neuroscience, how might we find a spirituality for today?*



***Friday 3 October to Sunday 5 October, 2014***

***Tolcarne Residence, 12 Tolcarne Ave, Dunedin***

***Full details can be found in the accompanying Programme  
and at [www.sof.org.nz](http://www.sof.org.nz)***

## Conference Backgrounder

# THE ASTONISHING FRANCIS CRICK

## Between the Alpha of DNA and the Omega of Consciousness\*

*He had a second career in laying the foundations of the modern science of the mind.*

**Francis Harry Compton Crick, OM, FRS** (8 June 1916 – 28 July 2004) was an English molecular biologist, biophysicist, and neuroscientist. He is most noted for being a co-discoverer of the structure of the DNA molecule (“double helix”) in 1953 with James Watson.

⌚ He, Watson, and Maurice Wilkins were jointly awarded the 1962 Nobel Prize for Physiology of Medicine “for their discoveries concerning the molecular structure of nucleic acids and its significance for information transfer in living material”. We know this as the ‘double-helix’ model.



⌚ In a second career he held the post of J.W. Kieckhefer Distinguished Research Professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in La Jolla, California. This later research centered on theoretical neurobiology and attempts to advance the scientific study of human consciousness.

He remained in this post until his death; “he was editing a manuscript on his death bed, a scientist until the bitter end” according to his neuroscience colleague, Christof Koch.

Wikipedia

## THE ASTONISHING HYPOTHESIS

“The Astonishing Hypothesis is that ‘You’, your joys, your memories, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. ... This hypothesis is so alien to the ideas of most people alive today that it can truly be called astonishing — because, in spite of differences among religions, there is broad agreement on at least one point: People have souls, in the literal and not merely metaphorical sense.”

Francis Crick pp3-4  
*The Astonishing Hypothesis*,  
Touchstone Books, 1994

## ASTONISHING CONSEQUENCES

Who am I?

*Where do I live – in my brain? body? soul?*

Does it matter how my mind works?

*How sensible is the notion that the mind (or ‘soul’, if you wish) can persist after the physical death of the brain? Where would it then exist?*

How much free will do I have? Who can justly hold me to account; the law?, the church? my neighbour?

*How probable is the notion that a person can so change their way of life that they can be said to be remorseful? Penitent? Is forgiveness a good idea?*

How credible is the assertion that, in a contest between the unconscious mind and the conscious mind, the unconscious will always win?

*How sustainable are religious ideas such as visionary and ecstatic experience?*

How viable are the historic Paths of Faith (a better word than “religions”), given that our understanding of brain functions have revealed scenarios unknown to our forebears, especially psychoanalysis and neuroscience?

*Is the universe conscious beyond the consciousness experienced by humans?*

Could I direct-connect to a computer?  
Direct download a language - an encyclopaedia? Swap minds with someone else?

\* Ralph M. Siegel

# ALL ABOUT US

## SEA OF FAITH: EXPLORING VALUES, SPIRITUALITY AND MEANING

**We are an association of people who have a common interest in exploring religious thought and expression from a non-dogmatic and human-oriented standpoint.**

Our formal name is The Sea of Faith Network (NZ) Inc.

We follow similar organisations in the UK and Australia in taking our name from the 1984 BBC TV series and book by the British religious academic, Don Cupitt.

**“Sea of Faith” both traces the decline of traditional Christian influence in the West in the past 250 years and invites the viewer to consider what might replace it. In New Zealand, the Sea of Faith Network provides a forum for the continued exploration.**

The Sea of Faith Network itself has no creed. We draw our members from people of all faiths and also from those with no attachment to religious institutions.

Our national **Steering Committee** publishes a Newsletter six times each year, maintains a website at [www.sof.org.nz](http://www.sof.org.nz), assists in setting up Local Groups, and organises an annual Conference.

We have six **Life Members**: Sir Lloyd Geering ONZ, Don Cupitt (UK), Noel Cheer, Ian Harris, Alan Goss and Fred Marshall.

**Chairperson**: Laurie Chisholm, 117 Collins Rd, RD4, Christchurch 7674, (03) 325-2142, 021-201-0302, [laurie.chisholm@ihug.co.nz](mailto:laurie.chisholm@ihug.co.nz)

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**Newsletter Editor and Webmaster** is Noel Cheer, the **Copy Editor** is Shirley Dixon and **Newsletter Distribution** is by Yvonne Curtis (paper copies) and Peter Cowley (emailed copies).

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**Deadline dates for submitted Newsletter copy in 2014 are:**  
**14 July, 25 August, 27 October.**

**Members may borrow books, CDs, and DVDs** from the Resource Centre which is managed by Suzi Thirlwall (07) 578-2775 [susanthirlwall@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:susanthirlwall@yahoo.co.nz) Refer to the catalogue on the website.

**Membership** of the national organisation costs \$20 per household per year (\$30 if outside NZ). Both charges drop to \$15 if the Newsletter is emailed and not on paper.

**To join**, send remittance and details to The Membership Secretary (listed above) or Internet bank to 38 9000 0807809 00 and tell [pcowley@paradise.net.nz](mailto:pcowley@paradise.net.nz) your mailing details.

**Bonus:** If you already receive the paper version then you can also receive the email version in addition, at no charge. Send an email requesting that to [pcowley@paradise.net.nz](mailto:pcowley@paradise.net.nz)

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# Personal Odysseys

## Paths travelled by members of Sea of Faith

### INTRODUCTION

At present, three SoF branches are introducing to their meetings an idea loosely based on the Religious Odyssey programme at All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, Kansas City, Missouri, USA. People there were encouraged to tell a little of their background and the religious journey they had travelled during their lifetimes. It was introduced to NZ Sea of Faith by a member of that church now living in the Hawkes Bay.

Stories now being shared – some with rather different conclusions from the original US ones – by SoF members in Dunedin, Hamilton and Napier and will be included in the Newsletter with the ultimate aim being to publish an enhanced collection in booklet form as an easily distributed resource. Such would reveal the diversity of people in SoF – backgrounds, spiritual journeys, and current thinking, together with their reasons for their membership of SoF. Together, these could show to enquirers why SoF is 'a safe place to discuss unsafe things'.

The following was presented to Hamilton SoF members at their meeting in April 2014.

**I WAS BORN THREE WEEKS EARLY IN ENGLAND**, amid bombs and barrage balloons, air raids and sirens when my mother was staying with my grandmother in Durham, and I moved home to Yorkshire at three weeks of age.

I was baptized at birth, as I was only 4 lbs 12 ounces, so when all the other mothers were being "Churched" as was common in those days, with babies baptized straight afterwards, I was only blessed. As Mother said "You always had to be different"!

I was the eldest child in a family of four. Our ages spread between 0 and 13, my 2 brothers being my father's "post war credits". I grew up knowing I had to take care of the little ones so was bossy from an early age. I am Number One on the Enneagram test so I like rules and I like other people to keep them, too!! I grew up to be independent.

When I was nearly five I started school. My father's parents lived with us so they were able to teach me to read, count, knit and tell the time long before I started school. Shoelaces were no trouble but knowing my left from my right was a problem as was knowing right from wrong. If I was caught out in any misdemeanor I used to say "Left did it!"

I got sixpence from the curate's wife for knowing Evensong off by heart before I started school. Strange words issued from my lips at times, however, like "As I pounced on a quinea world without end Amen."

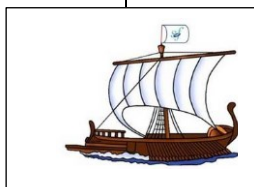
At school another sixpence became mine when the teacher said she had a "hole burning in her pocket" and as soon as someone could recite the Ten Commandments the happier she would be. Sixpence was a lot in those days. I was rich...

In those days attending Sunday School was a given; we all trundled along the village street at 2 p.m. on Sundays and sang choruses and had a teacher per class. The one I remember best was Miss Lyons -- we pronounced it Loins just as she did. She wore a black toque and a fur coat stinking of mothballs. She had slack false teeth and whistled when she said an "s". We learnt things like Dare to Be a Daniel and Fishers of Men, etc. and sang with gusto and swaying to the music. For attendance we got a card and as soon as we got ten, as long as they were in pristine condition, they could be swapped for a glitter card to keep and the small cards were recycled. At the end of each year we had the Anniversary when we recited poems and scripture and sang and got prizes of books for attendance and for being good. The "Trip" was the highlight of our year but often it was to one of our fields so not very exciting for me. The races, prizes and picnic tea were though, and a fine time was had by all.

I knew that as I grew older I would have to go away to school which happened when I was 9 and went with my sister, 7, to a Quaker school on the Yorkshire Moors until I was 18.

In the village, Sunday School children 'went up' when they were 12 and joined Miss Taylor's class for Bible study which I attended when I was home. She was flat chested and dressed in beige. She wanted to be a Missionary but her old parents would not let her go. She taught things like 'The Reapers are Few and the Days pass at length, but we too may be reapers and go forth in strength to work for the Lord in His harvest'. We all felt

sorry for her. This did not make us nice to her, however, but I learnt to behave or Dad would... We all joined Girl Guides at school and in the holidays joined the local troop and had camps and did tests for badges up our





sleeves. It was Christian based and Miss Dale had a great influence on my life. I had to go to church with Mum in the morning and the evening. When my brother came along when I was 11 we were excused Evensong but I enjoyed it and was the only child who attended. I sat in the front row and the organist, the vicar's wife, came and sat beside me and gave me a sweet to suck. It was then that I felt called to be a vicar. Put on hold for fifty years.

It was about this time, at the age of 11, that I passed an exam to go to a Grammar School and was asked what I wanted to be when I grew up. I said "I'm going to be a Vicar." Alan Wilderspin, on the front row, cross legged and ginger haired, shouted out "You can't be, stupid, you have to be a man!".

I was told that nursing was the next best thing so as I grew older and passed my O levels and A levels I became a nurse. I trained in Leeds at the General Infirmary which was doing a new type of programme. I took year one with medical students, in theory, then years two and three as a nurse on the wards, then year four as a student again, doing all theory. We ended up very well versed in such things as putting in acupuncture needles and applying leeches and cups. I never had to do this again for over 40 years when suddenly it has become fashionable again.

After doing general nursing I took midwifery and delivered babies in houses of dubious cleanliness. Many had the lavatory down the street and a huge key hung by the mantelpiece so that you could go for a walk to the loo when necessary. Bathrooms did not exist and baths were taken in a large tin bath in front of the fire. I can mix with any level of society as a result. Eventually I went with my friend to take psychiatry training at the Bethlem and Maudsley in London. This was the original Bedlam but has now taken the name of The Maudsley. The lamp in the chapel has been lit since the 1400s .

My grandfather was born in the Rutland Stockade in 1865 in New Zealand, so my sister and I came here in 1964 to see relations and to have a break after our training. We spent two years here, me in the operating theatre in Waikato Hospital and Cherry in Wellington. We decided to go home via India and visit our cousin in Singapore for Christmas. To fill in time between Christmas and March, when the bus we had booked left Bombay for London (The Indiaman), we offered to do some missionary work in return for our keep.

I did not know it would change my life.

I stayed three years running an orphanage at the time of the Bihari Famine, my sister caught the bus. She got involved in the hippy movement and eventually died of an

overdose, after marriage and two children. She was Dad's favourite: it nearly killed him.

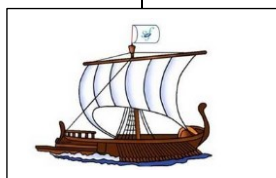
I stayed on in India and had to judge the queue of children every morning for those we would feed and those who were past help. If they had sunset eyes, swollen tummies, or were breathless with swollen legs we had to turn them away and then go in and eat our breakfast. They watched through the window but I fed 90 and had food only for 60 so if I had not done that we would all have starved. I had a nanny, Parti, who used to buy tinned baby milk for me in the market. It said "A free gift from NZ" -- we had to pay for it. It would not have existed had I gone to buy it. Such things change you.

I came home after three years and decided to do my



degree. I took psychiatry and religious studies with the dynamic Lloyd Geering, my friend to this day [and in latter years my connection with the Sea of Faith]. After my degree I was asked to lecture at Massey Wellington and this I did for 21 years.

A child psychiatrist friend asked me to take a boy for a week to give him a break and so began my fostering years. I had six children at different times, some overlapped: 1) A for Anxious; 2) A for Academic; 3) A for Autistic; 4) A for Aggressive; 5) A for Abandoned and 6) A for Anorexic. Three were siblings and I adopted them and they became my children, two daughters and a son. Naturally they were all disturbed and all came via mental health services. Kate married, had three children, got cancer and we lost her about seven years ago. Kaaren took a degree and has a doctorate in Marine Biology and lives alone in Australia. Max,



the most damaged, is in Vancouver working with computers, a mystery to me. He has a super Texan partner and they have a civil union and are very happy on the whole. I get to see them every two years.

After 50 years of wanting to be a priest I got my chance at 61 and here I am. After seven years living in the Bay of Plenty and serving as a Priest Assistant, I moved to be nearer family and old friends and have been Priest Assistant to the diocesan bishop for a decade. Retired clergy and widows/ers fall under my care and I look after the Prostitutes Collective and the paedophiles that nobody else seemed keen to take on.

I wonder what the future holds. An exciting prospect...

M.A.B

#### Editor's Comment:

*This is the type of article that the Newsletter is designed for and the above is a fine example. I would like to see more such and I am aware that some are already in preparation.*

*In issuing such an invitation, an editor may create a problem: too many responses; copy that is not well thought through; formulaic writing and articles that are just too long. If you can avoid such problems and keep the article to less than 1500 words, then I would like to receive it. But, in the end, it is my judgement as to its suitability for publishing.*

Noel Cheer, Editor

\* \* \* \* \*

## WEBSITE SEARCHING

We have accumulated nearly 2 decades worth of material on our website. If you are finding it difficult to find items then this might be just what you are looking for.



If you use Google Search and add a "site" command in the Google Search bar the search is restricted to the site that you specified. Example:

religious atheists site:sof.org.nz

Alternatively, if you are already on the Main Menu page of the website, scroll to the bottom and use the Google Search bar found there.

## JUDAS, MY BROTHER

### WEAK AS LITERATURE BUT GOOD ON ANALYSIS

#### A comment from Norman Maclean of Gisborne:

A brief response to the **Jesus in Fiction** sample list appearing in the April edition of Sea of Faith Newsletter:

If titles as pious and historically inaccurate as *Ben Hur* and *The Robe* and Kazantzakis's mystical fantasy are to be considered, there really should be mention of *Judas, My Brother* by Frank Yerby, best-known for his rip-snortin' tales of America's Deep South before the Civil War.

*Judas, My Brother*, published by Heinemann in 1969 is a 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. bodice-ripper that revels in blood, sex and brutality *but* is remarkably authentic in historical terms. The author's research for this book occupied him for thirty years and his lengthy, often humorous footnotes at the end of the novel are loaded with soundly based and highly critical comments in a full thirty-seven pages. This man was onto exegesis of a very thorough kind, long before most people had heard the term.

It's a thoroughly entertaining read of no literary value but highly entertaining and offering a surprisingly penetrating analysis of the difference between Gospel "truth" and historical likelihood. The narrator is Jesus' first cousin who closely resembles the Galilean charismatic. I warmly recommend it though it's long out of print but probably available via libraries.

Norman Maclean

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Book Blurb:

## THE FALSE PROMISES OF THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

How Computers transform Education, Work, and International Development in Ways that are Ecologically Unsustainable  
by C. A. Bowers

*The False Promises of the Digital Revolution* examines what currently goes largely unnoticed because of the many important uses of digital technologies. While many people interpret digital technologies as accelerating the global rate of progress, C. A. Bowers focuses attention on how they reinforce the deep and ecologically problematic cultural assumptions of the West: the myth\* of progress, the substitution of data for different cultural traditions of wisdom, the connections between print and abstract thinking, the myth of individual autonomy, the conduit view of language that hides how words (metaphors) reproduce earlier

misconceptions, and a Social Darwinian justification for colonizing other cultures that is now leading to armed resistance – which, in turn, strengthens the ties between corporations, the military, and the computer science industry. The book also investigates how to understand the cultural non-neutrality of digital technologies; how print and the emphasis on data undermine awareness of the tacit information pathways between cultural and natural.

Order: [www.peterlang.com/index.cfm?cid=165#6162135](http://www.peterlang.com/index.cfm?cid=165#6162135)

*\* In philosophy of religion, "myth" is an explanatory story the objective truth of which is unimportant as in "The Garden of Eden". In most other contexts, a "myth" is a misleading fallacy.*

\* \* \* \* \*

**Book Blurb:**

## THE EVANGELICALS AND THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

**Michael Strickland**

*The Evangelicals and the Synoptic Problem* aims to investigate how evangelical Christians and their Protestant forebears, labelled early orthodox Protestants, have dealt with the classic puzzle of New Testament criticism known as the Synoptic Problem.

The particular theories considered are the Independence Hypothesis, the Augustinian Hypothesis, the Two-Gospel Hypothesis, the Two-Source Hypothesis, and the Farrer hypothesis.

Starting with John Calvin and continuing to the modern day, consideration is given to the various evangelical biblical scholars throughout the centuries.

Special attention is given to major evangelical contributors to the subject since 1950. In addition, a chapter is devoted to the role ecclesiology has played in evangelical consideration of the synoptic problem. After analyzing the opinions offered over almost half a millennium, it is compelling to note how arguments have changed and how they have remained the same.

*Michael Strickland earned his PhD at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. He is currently Assistant Professor of Theology at Amridge University in Montgomery, Alabama*

Order online at:

[www.peterlang.com/download/datasheet/76180/datasheet\\_312402.pdf](http://www.peterlang.com/download/datasheet/76180/datasheet_312402.pdf)

### "A SCIENTIST WHO HAPPENS TO BE A LAY CHRISTIAN ..."

You can read more about Lionel Sharman's book *Matter & What Matters* (which was reviewed in Newsletter 110) on its own website at <http://whatmatters.net.nz/>

### Signing Off:

## LLOYD GEERING ENDS HIS LECTURING AT AGE 96

When he recently turned 96 years of age, Professor Lloyd Geering decided to retire from his role as Principal Lecturer of SATRS, the St Andrew's Trust for the Study of Religion and Society. His final talk in that capacity was given during the week of the opening of the new St Andrew's Centre on Tuesday 6 May, 2014 at St Andrew's on The Terrace in Wellington.

"I am in good health and enjoying my tenth decade," Lloyd said.

Through a long lifetime of publishing and lecturing, both within and outside of the St Andrew's Trust, Lloyd has offered a view of religion that appeals to mature and questing people as well as being vitally necessary in a world that is becoming more politically fractured and environmentally fragile.

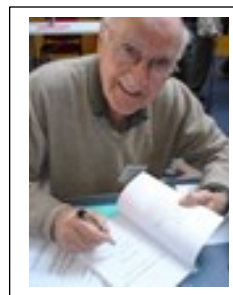
As the Trust's Principal Lecturer, Professor Geering has delivered one or more series of lectures each year since 1984. Most of these lectures have an afterlife as booklets, CDs or DVDs.

His recent book, *From The Big Bang to God: Our awe-inspiring journey of evolution*, extends a publishing career which was launched in 1968 with *God In The New World*.

Professor Geering was appointed the foundation Professor of Religious Studies at Victoria University of Wellington in 1971 and, more recently, has been involved in Biblical research in the company of scholars from the Westar Institute in the United States. In 2007, Professor Geering was admitted to the Order of New Zealand and two years later elevated to Knight Grand Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

While Lloyd's active involvement with the Trust will be greatly missed, it has been Wellington's good fortune to have been the main location for these lectures. Rather than actively seeking one individual to step into Sir Lloyd's shoes, the Trust will broaden its activities into different forms of lectureship.

St Andrew's Trust Website [www.satrs.org.nz](http://www.satrs.org.nz)





Conference Backgrounder

# CONCEPT WARS

## HELPING US GET OVER DESCARTES

### Why is Mind-Body a 'Problem'?

*Maybe it's the way we think.*

*One of the more genial writers on the mind/body problem is John Searle. He wrote:*



René Descartes

“Since Descartes, the mind-body problem has taken the following form: How can we account for the relationships between two apparently completely *different kinds* of things?

On the one hand, there are mental things, such as our thoughts and feelings; we think of them as subjective, conscious, and immaterial.

“On the other hand, there are physical things; we think of them as having mass, as extended in space, and as causally interacting with other physical things.

“Most attempted solutions to the mind-body problem wind up by denying the existence of, or in some way downgrading the status of, one or the other of these types of things.

Given the successes of the physical sciences, it is not surprising that in our stage of intellectual development the temptation is to downgrade the status of *mental* entities. So, most of the recently fashionable materialist conceptions of the mind, such as behaviourism, functionalism, and physicalism, end up by denying, implicitly or explicitly, that there are any such things as minds as we ordinarily think of them. That is, they deny that we do really *intrinsically* have subjective, conscious, mental states and that they are as real and as irreducible as anything else in the universe.

Now, why do they do that? Why is it that so many theorists end up denying the intrinsically mental character of mental phenomena?

If we can answer that question, I believe that we will understand why the mind-body problem has seemed so intractable for so long.”

John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science*  
Penguin Books, 1984 p14-15

### Popper's Three Worlds

*Its not “stuff all the way down”*



Karl Popper

The **Three Worlds** model is a way of looking at reality which helps us set aside the form of Dualism promoted by Descartes. This model was described by the Austrian philosopher Karl Popper in a lecture in 1978 and involves three interacting worlds:

- **World 1: the world of physical objects and events, including biological entities. This makes...**
- **World 2: the world of mental objects and events: human consciousness. This makes ...**
- **World 3: the products of human culture.**

This theory of interaction between World 1 and World (consistent with modern science) is an alternative theory to that which says that the universe is composed of two essential, irreducible substances: *Res Extensa* and *Res Cogitans* ("physical stuff" and "thinking stuff").

**This division is called *Cartesian dualism* and, though it persists in popular thought, most western science and philosophy rejects it.**

Popper's World 3 contains the **products** of thought which include abstract objects such as scientific theories, stories, myths, tools, social institutions, and works of art.

Consider this example: a book can be thought of as both a World 1 and a World 3 object. In World 1 it is a thing of paper, or plastic or as a DVD or as magnetised domains on a computer hard-drive. In World 3 it is a repository of facts and ideas – independent of the medium on which it resides.

*Adapted from Wikipedia*



**Note that World 1 makes World 3, but only via World 2**



**Conference Backgrounder**

## **BODY/BRAIN/MIND/SOUL: A QUARTETTE**

That we all have a body is beyond dispute. That we all have a mind is similarly certain. The debate starts when we try to describe the relationship between them. For the purpose of this piece I will offer two opposed points of view.

Let us say that we have two phenomena, called "A" and "B".

- On the one hand we can say "A and B each exists without one causing the other".
- On the other hand we can say that "A causes B" (or "B causes A")

**The first relationship may be called "dualism" while the second, "causation".**

In the traditional "dualist" view, the term "soul" sometimes stands in for what we now call "mind". The relationship is such that the physical body acts as a temporary residence for the soul/mind. Many conventionally-religious people hold to a view something like that and with it postulate a range of phenomena which may include any or all of the following: re-incarnation, transmigration of souls, and post-mortem existence which might entail divine judgement upon death or upon a general resurrection of all the dead at a later time. Such judgement may lead to ongoing existence in eternity in a blessed or a damned state.

The more modern "causation" view proposes that the mind is not an independent substance but rather a series of more-or-less coherent processes. The American philosopher John Searle (see page 8) suggest a parallel between body-making-mind and stomach-making-digestion or liver-making-bile.

**In short, the mind is what the brain is doing.**

Gilbert Ryle (1900–76) was a philosopher who lectured at Oxford and who made important contributions to the philosophy of mind. He stated that when he was writing his celebrated *The Concept of Mind* in 1949, there was an "official doctrine" of body/mind dualism which he summarised as "every human being has both a body and a mind. ... The body and the mind are ordinarily harnessed together, but after the death of the body the mind may continue to exist and function." This relationship had been formally promulgated by Rene Descartes (1596-1650) though it had been assumed by Greek philosophers centuries earlier.

Ryle invented the term "category-mistake" in *The Concept of Mind* to remove what he argued to be a confusion over the nature of mind in the metaphysics of Descartes. He showed that it was a mistake to treat the

mind as if it were an object, even if it were made of an immaterial substance, because what can be said about substance are not meaningful when applied to a collection of dispositions, capacities and processes. He argued that to speak of mind as a *substance*, as a dualist does, is to commit a category-mistake

A subtext in this SoF Conference asks what effect will be felt in traditional ways of life if the traditional *dualistic* mind/body relationship is replaced by the *causation* model. If it can be shown that freewill is an illusion, or just unreliable, then what is to happen to accountability before the law? And, closer to home, what forms of religious expression are feasible if we were to discover that visionary experiences are entirely self-generated and that the notion of a supernatural order of reality is based on transforming metaphors into apparently objective facts?

*Noel Cheer*

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## **RESPECT AND RADICAL RELIGION**

*A summary by Beverley Smith from Gisborne of an article by Dominic Kirkham published in the December 2013 UK magazine 'SOFIA'. Refer to [www.sofn.org.uk](http://www.sofn.org.uk)*

**In London, a Sikh had just been in a dispute with another member of the Temple (Gurdwara) Fundraising Committee over the wording of a publicity leaflet on which it was suggested to put some appropriate words of wisdom from the Guru Granth. One of the committee vehemently opposed such a suggestion on the basis that perhaps a leaflet would be dropped on the floor and trodden on, which would lead to the desecration of a text from Holy Scripture. This would constitute an intolerable lack of respect.**

Kirkham says: "‘Respect’ is a word increasingly being called upon in the multitudinous discordant discourses that characterize contemporary society. From footballers being racially abused, to ethnic street gangs demanding – in the terminology of Ali G – ‘respek’, or reporters picking up on Islamophobia, or Anti-Semitism, the demand for respect is all pervasive; we even have a political party going by the name. After all, to be disrespectful of difference not only undermines the multicultural civilization to which we now belong but reopens the door to the inequities of fascism which last century led to unprecedented barbarity. **‘Respect’ is a word that patrols the frontiers between two states of being – savagery and civilization.**"

For the Sikh, the purpose of Holy Scripture was to promote positive behaviour and human fellowship. The

Christian perspective of the sayings of Jesus was that the Sabbath was made for man, not the other way round. The test for respect should be the quality of human interaction it enables, not just the defence of difference.

“This wider perspective can easily be lost sight of. So much so that the eager defence of difference has now become a challenge to social cohesion; the reification of different traditions replacing aspirations of global harmony with a new tribalism. Respect for incompatible, and sometimes unacceptable, practices is common: child marriage or female circumcision, whatever the cultural justification, is this not to be regarded as child abuse? In a highly interactive world the search for personal identity and cultural rootedness is understandable. But, paradoxically, the regressive potentiality of religious difference has been growing in tandem with global modernity for over a century and now acts as a powerful counter tow.”

It was in the nineteenth century that whole blocks of humanity began to be consigned to particular ethnicities or races, and their beliefs to all inclusive ‘isms’. There was Hindoo-ism, Sikhism and Bhootha-ism and in China Confucianism was concocted out of what had been merely collections of disparate precepts, to represent the religious ‘essence of the Chinese people’.

“Reflecting on his experience of Nazism, Martin Niemöller wrote a searing indictment of sectarian isolationism:

**“First they came for the Communists and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a Communist; then they came for the Socialists and I didn’t speak out because I wasn’t a Socialist, then they came for the Trade Unionists and.. then the Jews...then the Catholics.. then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me.”**

Even those with whom we may feel we have little in common and with whose beliefs we do not agree still share with us something much more fundamental and important – humanity. This should be the lodestone of respect.”

“We cannot afford to live in ignorance of our neighbour, respect demands interaction and a shared sense of humanity.

Thus we enter our contemporary world, shaped on one hand, by globalization and increasing inter-connectedness but on the other, by cultural entities defined in counter-distinction to their neighbours by radicalized religion.”

Of the 9/11, the London July, and The Boston bombers, it was said they seemed to be quite ordinary and then began to become more religious. With all of these something changed, as they entered into the

hermetically sealed world of the religious traditionalist-cum-fundamentalist, which defines itself against everyone else; where the ties of common humanity are obliterated by sectarian rage.

With blind submission to draconian and misogynistic laws, though many may be reassured by totally prescribed ways of life, the greatest need is to discriminate between what is culturally relative and what is essential to humanity.

The recent and wanton sacking of Timbuktu by Islamists was a bizarre example of control and intolerance, in which any education is forbidden. All knowledge not circumscribed by a specific text, even all historical memory must be excised.

According to the concept of *Sola scriptura*, nothing must be allowed to compromise the incontestable word. Even the Calvinists subscribed to this.

“One of the most contentious subjects in modern Israel is archaeology; there is no consensus between those who read the archaeological evidence through the eyes of Biblical belief and those secularists who read the Bible through the evidence of archaeology. To one, King David founded Jerusalem earning mythic, eschatological status, to others he is merely a hill country bandit whose achievements were appropriated from a later apostate king, Omri.”

Regardless of belief, reality also demands respect when science presents overwhelming evidence but which contradicts religious tradition – consider Galileo, and ponder that the world is not six thousand years old, that contemporary humans are but one survival of numerous previous human variants; that women are not defective males; that homosexuality is a natural condition, and so on.

Acts of appalling brutality that entail the killing of innocent individuals, as in the murder of drummer Lee Rigby cannot be tolerated in a modern society, let alone respected.

Kirkham says that in all walks of life, respect is earned by generosity of spirit and noble behavior. Religion, as the philosopher A.C. Grayling recently wrote, is “the belief system of our remote ancestors who knew little about the universe, and made up stories to explain themselves.” They may contain profound insights, but they remain, just that, stories.

In the end it is not religious belief but Life – in all its forms – that is worthy of respect. We respect life and we respect this world because, in the end, it is all we have.

**Beverley Smith**





# The Last Word

Laurie Chisholm, Chairperson

“Exploring Inner Space” is the title of this year’s Conference. It implies an interest in taking a psychological approach. In the Sea of Faith, we tend to explore ideas in themselves, that is, detached from any particular person who might think them. So we analyse and critique them, asking whether they stand up to modern science or (in the case of claims about Jesus or early Christianity) historical investigation. A psychological approach is rather different. It follows Nietzsche’s saying: “One must investigate ideas in the direction of the heads that find them necessary.” It doesn’t ask about the ultimate, objective truth of the ideas, but rather explores how they function, what role they play for the person. Instead of looking at ideas in the abstract, it looks first at the person, and then at the ideas the person holds.

Some stories may help to illustrate the challenge of a psychological approach.

When I was a teenager, my liberal Baptist minister lent me a book: *Battle for the Mind* by William Sargant who argued that there was a common mechanism behind Soviet brainwashing and religious conversion. Based on Pavlov’s research, he postulated that when people are subject to overwhelming stress or overstimulation, their brains shut down, entering a state called transmarginal inhibition. In this state, they adopt whatever belief system is presented, whether communist ideology or evangelical Christianity. This explaining away of conversion experiences pulled the rug out from under me, as they were (then) my only basis for belief in God. Subsequent conversations with my minister altered this conclusion. Although I can no longer recall what he said, I treasure this memory; I can’t imagine the ministers of today’s conservative churches giving a parishioner such a subversive book.

During my study to become a Presbyterian minister, we were trained in Carl Rogers’ non-directive counselling. Counselling proved very attractive to some, but to me the method seemed mechanical and artificial (you act as a kind of neutral mirror, reflecting back what the “client” says to you). Years later, I participated in a weekend workshop led by someone who had trained

under Carl Rogers himself. She was able to really listen and this was an overwhelming, contagious experience. Her training in non-directive counselling gave her a great ability to put love into practice, by comparison sermons on love and compassion seemed bland and ineffective.

Soon after arriving in his first position as a newly ordained priest, Eugen Drewermann was asked for help by a man who was recovering at a health resort. He had begun an extramarital affair and was bewildered and distressed by this but unwilling or unable to give it up. Drewermann realised that all his studies in theology and existential philosophy were of no help, so he began training in psychoanalysis. This brought him into conflict with his superiors and questioned his whole life direction to date. He worked through this, writing major works incorporating a psychotherapeutic approach: on the Fall and other stories in the early chapters of Genesis, on moral theology, on the ideal of priesthood (poverty, chastity and obedience) and on the interpretation of religious texts.

Tilman Moser began training as a psychoanalyst, which involves being analysed yourself. The analysis focussed on the internalised parental figures at work in his psyche. However, Moser became aware that there was another internalised figure at work, ignored by his analyst: God. Moser wrote a book, *Gottesvergiftung* (God-poisoning) in which he told how he freed himself from this powerful, destructive God-image. More recently he has written on the therapy of those suffering from “ecclesiogenic neurosis,” psychological problems caused by a neurotic church culture.

Michael Murphy and Dick Price grew up in liberal congregations but sought something more experiential and intellectually open to diversity. In 1962 they founded the Esalen Institute, a retreat centre in California. This offered (and still offer) a great variety of workshops and small group experiences all in the service of the goal of self-actualisation and direct spiritual experience: meditation, yoga, Tai Chi, massage, marathon encounter groups and new kinds of psychotherapy. Important figures such as Abraham Maslow, Fritz Perls, and William Shutz ran workshops. In the early days, Hollywood celebrities such as Cary

**“ecclesiogenic neurosis” psychological problems caused by a neurotic church culture.**



Grant, Natalie Wood and Jane Fonda paid visits. The diversity gave participants the choice of “whatever works” on their spiritual journey, providing a meaningful alternative to established liberal Christian faith. Psychotherapy was seen as a means of personal growth rather than of recovery from mental illness. The “Body Mind and Spirit” section of your local bookshop is a distant echo of the powerful impulses that radiated from this centre.

These stories show the diversity of psychological approaches and the inter-relation of psychology and spirituality. To be sure, some approaches aim to undermine spirituality but others underline its importance. Jung was convinced of the importance of myth for understanding the unconscious. Abraham Maslow was interested in “peak experiences” and saw them playing an important role in the fully functioning human being. Stanislav Grof regards many mental health crises as “spiritual emergencies,” in which something spiritually new is trying to emerge. The experience of psychotherapy tends to open up deep questions about the meaning of life and our personal identity.

*Laurie Chisholm,  
Chairperson 2013-2014*

### Postscript 1

## TAKING PERSONS SERIOUSLY

The following was written by Eugene Drewermann who is described in following article.

“I believe also that in psychotherapy many experiences are awakened and many levels of human experience are addressed, that are originally religious. The people themselves don’t usually interpret it that way, and the Church often refuses to see it that way. But what in fact occurs in psychotherapy is nothing other than that which I believe religion should do, namely to open a realm in which people can live without censure and without being directed, and in which the first questions isn’t, “What are you doing? Are you doing it right?” – according to our criteria – but “What is happening in you? What kind of person are you? What story do you come with? What is the truth that can only be lived in you?” We want to find this out, without force, without determining the goal in advance, for your sake. I regard such taking persons seriously as centrally religious....”

### Postscript 2

## EUGEN DREWERMANN

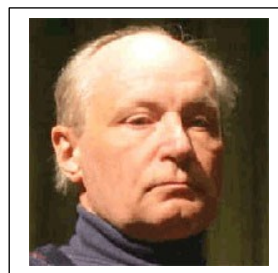
Eugen Drewermann (born June 20, 1940) is a German church critic, theologian, peace activist and former Roman Catholic priest. His work has been translated into more than a dozen languages.

Drewermann was born in Bergkamen near Dortmund. He is best known in Germany for his work toward a non-violent form of Christianity, which, he believes, requires an integration of Depth Psychology into Exegesis and Theology.

Trained in philosophy, theology, psychoanalysis, and comparative religious studies, he criticized the Roman Catholic Church's literal and biologicistic interpretations of miracles, the virgin birth, Ascension, and Resurrection as superstitious and medieval. He called on Rome to understand biblical stories symbolically in such a way that they can become present and healing to readers today. Drewermann's controversial opinions on Catholic dogma, especially the Virgin birth of Jesus lead to a letter expressing "deep worry," in 1986 by then-Cardinal Ratzinger, to Drewermann's archbishop.

The struggle propelled Drewermann into the public limelight and culminated in 1991 after he published a radical critique of what he considers to be the Vatican's psychologically cruel and mentally enslaving clergy ideal (*Kleriker: Psychogramm eines Ideals* [Clergy: Psychogram of an ideal]). Archbishop Degenhardt of Paderborn and the Catholic Bishops Conference of Germany engaged in a long drawn-out and heated debate with Drewermann which was closely followed by media and public. As a consequence, on October 7, 1991 the Archbishop disallowed him to teach at the Catholic Seminary of Paderborn and, shortly afterwards, revoked his license to preach.

Drewermann has uttered strong and controversial political opinions. He was against the Gulf War, the Iraq War, German participation in the NATO war against Afghanistan, and Israeli Air Raids during the 2006 Lebanon War. In the name of the German Peace Movement, he asked to abolish not only Walter Mixa's office as Military Bishop of Germany but the German military, the Bundeswehr, as such. Drewermann has signed public calls to support the “Linkspartei” and delivers speeches on conferences and protest demonstrations of the left.



Drewermann left the Catholic Church on his 65th birthday on June 20, 2005, a decision he broadly announced on Sandra Maischbergers Talkshow on German television.

*Wikipedia*