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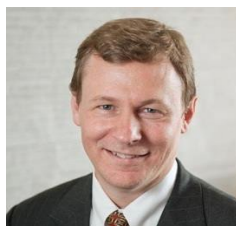
Sir Alister Hardy's Legacy: The Study of Religious Experience Today

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

On 14 June 2024, 2-7 p.m. (online)

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

<https://uwtsd.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=d182c8cf-fd9f-4665-bcf4-b1b000953e9f>



Programme

Online site will open at 13.45 p.m.

14.00 p.m.

Welcome

Prof Bettina Schmidt, Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre

Prof Leslie Francis, Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust

The Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture

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

The Dimensions of Spirituality Inventory

Respondent: Prof Jeff Astley, Bishop Grosseteste University

Q&A session

16.00-16.30 Break

16.30 p.m. Current Research on Spiritual and Religious Experiences

Revd. Richard Vroom, Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands

The psychological types of people narrating Religious and Spiritual Experiences

Dr Zsuzsanna Szugyiczki, University of Szeged, Hungary

A bridge between traditional and modern: characteristics of mystical experiences

Rev. Dr Seth Jones, New York

Extraordinary Spiritual Experiences and Models of Meaning-Making

Followed by Round Table discussion with all speakers.

19.00 p.m. Closure

Abstracts

Panel 1: The Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture

Prof Welsey J. Wildman

The Dimensions of Spirituality Inventory

Abstract:

The keynote lecture will introduce the innovative dimensions of spirituality inventory. It will further reflect on the intense experiences among the nonreligions and show how the dimensions of spirituality inventory can be used to study the spiritual styles of a range of people including the nonreligious.

Short Bio:

Philosopher of Religion Wesley Wildman has worked on many aspects of science and religion. He is particularly interested in what light can be shed on religious behaviours, beliefs, and experiences from the biological and human sciences. His specializations are philosophy of religion and computational social sciences. He is the Director of Boston University's innovative humanities-science doctoral program in Religion and Science and deeply committed to multidisciplinary research and training. Among his most recent publications are *Modeling Religions: Simulating the Transformation of Worldviews, Lifeways, and Civilizations* (with F. Leron Shults, Bloomsbury, 2024), *The Winding Way Home* (Wildhouse Fiction, 2023), and *Spirit Tech: The Brave New World of Consciousness Hacking and Enlightenment Engineering* (with Kate J. Stockly, St Martin's Press, 2021).

Respondent: Prof Jeff Astley, Bishop Grosseteste University

Short Bio:

Jeff Astley is an honorary professor at Durham University, Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln and York St John University. He studied biology and theology at Cambridge, and theology at Birmingham and Durham. His doctorate is in the philosophy of religion. He is an Anglican priest and was Director of the ecumenical

North of England Institute for Christian Education for three decades. His current primary interests are in practical theology (especially 'ordinary theology'), the science and religion debate (especially with respect to evolutionary biology) and the study of religious and spiritual experience. In addition to over 150 journal articles and essay chapters, he is the author or editor/co-editor of over 40 books on theological, educational and religious issues, including the SCM *Studyguide to Religious and Spiritual Experience* (2020).

Panel 2: Current Research on Spiritual and Religious Experiences

Revd Richard Vroom

Psychological Type and Religious and Spiritual Experiences (RSEs): an analysis of the records within the Alister Hardy Database.

Abstract:

We looked for particular 'signs' of RSEs to use as a lens to look at the written accounts. We studied the field of psychology of personality and concluded that C. Jung's theory and the developed MBTI framework are appropriate to analyse the accounts. We will try to find the preferences of Introversion/Extraversion, Sensing/intuition, Thinking/Feeling and, if possible, Judging/Perceiving. We discovered not all accounts lend themselves to analysis. The cause can be that the text is too short, or does not contain an RSE within our defined criteria.

Short Bio:

The Revd Richard Vroom is currently at Radboud University, Nijmegen, researching how psychological type is apparent in reported religious and spiritual experience within the Alister Hardy Archive. Previously he served in various parishes in the Netherlands (Old-Catholic Church, Union of Utrecht) and 10 years in Tywyn, for the Church in Wales. He studied in Amsterdam, Leuven, at the Sorbonne in Paris, and in Warwick. Currently he works on his PhD at the University of Nijmegen (Radboud).

Dr Zsuzsanna Szugyiczki

A bridge between traditional and modern: characteristics of mystical experiences

Abstract:

The presentation aims to explore four sets of characteristics of mystical experiences through the RERC database. Firstly, words of opposite meanings, showcasing the perceived uniqueness and ineffability of mystical states. Secondly, expressions that point to shifts in temporal perception. Thirdly, the language that reflects altered perceptions and the profound impact these experiences have on individuals. Fourthly, immediate feelings, uncontrollable bodily reactions, and actions, that are associated with the intensity of the experience. Furthermore, it is assumed that these characteristics are present not only in traditional examples but in modern mysticism as well.

Short Bio:

Dr Zsuzsanna Szugyiczki is an Assistant Professor, and non-formal educational trainer at the University of Szeged, Hungary. Her main area of research is mysticism in modernity. In 2023 she defended her doctoral dissertation titled: *Mysticism beyond time: A comparative study of Traditional vs. modern mysticism*.

Rev. Dr Seth Jones

Extraordinary Spiritual Experiences and Models of Meaning-Making

Abstract

Within the study of the extraordinary, the liminal, and the strange, we often focus on the experience itself. My work focuses on the integration of the experience into our daily lives. Through my work in the field of theology and semiotics, I have discerned a pattern of meaning-making that can help us navigate the topography of the extraordinary. The simple pattern is not meant to be thought of as stages, but rather points or aspects on a shifting map of liminal spaces. The four aspects we will explore are: Set and Setting, Appearance, Revelation, and Disclosure. Each aspect has a tendency toward particular modes of expression, and each provides avenues of meaning-making. This allows us to traverse the weird, the unusual, and the experiential in a way that allows multiple points of access to meaning and understanding. Extraordinary Spiritual Experiences (ESEs) in particular, provide a multifaceted, diverse realm for the exploration of meaning and how we integrate it into our lives.

Short Bio:

Rev. Dr Seth Jones has had a circuitous path in the worlds of spirituality and academia. After graduating with a Master of Arts in Religious Studies, he joined a martial arts commune and taught Tai Chi Chuan for many years. Realizing he was called to ministry, he received his Master of Divinity from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. He served churches in beautiful locations for 15 years. He received his Doctor of Ministry in Semiotics, Church, and Culture from Portland Seminary, Oregon, in 2022. His doctorate project was on Extraordinary Spiritual Experiences. This project was born out of his participation in the Johns Hopkins/NYU Spiritual Leader study in psychedelics. Seth lives in Brooklyn, NY and works in AI data training, writes at his blog, psychedelicpastor.com, and visits art museums with his wife.