



The Cosmic Consciousness Connection

Eve Hicks and Jan Arriens



Overall Synopsis. Thanks to Di Clift, the catalyst and heroic organiser of this amazing annual event, the SMN have been going to Frenchman's Cove near Port Antonio, Jamaica, for a study conference every year since 1997 (apart from a break in 2002-2007). The focus of this year's excuse for a trip to this magical corner of Jamaica was the Cosmic Consciousness Connection. Professor Bernard Carr was the main speaker, although being the only participant with a physics background, he made it clear from the start that he would welcome questions throughout – either to clarify or expand on material covered. The objective was to shed more light on the link between matter, mind and spirit.

Lectures were broadly divided into three parts: (i) foundations of relevant physics theory; (ii) the problem of consciousness and how to get mind into physics; and (iii) spiritual aspects with a particular focus on paranormal and mystical experiences.

The discussion of physics centred on the description and explanation of matter, focussing in particular on our understanding of ever larger and smaller scales. The Uroborus, used first in ancient Egyptian iconography, was used to symbolise the micro and macro forms of matter and the various connections between them. It is clear that what we call the Universe is continuously growing. Plato's

geocentric view, with the Earth at the centre of the universe, prevailed until the 15th century, when Copernicus discovered that the Earth moves around the Sun. Subsequently, Brahe and Kepler discovered the laws of planetary motion, which Newton explained in the 17th century with his law of universal gravitation. Newton's world was 3-dimensional, with space and time being absolute. However, Einstein's work on special relativity in the early part of the 20th century made it clear that space and time are not absolute but different aspects of 4-dimensional spacetime. Furthermore, general relativity a decade later showed that spacetime is warped in the presence of matter, thereby explaining the origin of gravity.



Although the size of a human being is the geometric mean of the smallest and largest scale of the Cosmic Uroborus, so that we are central in terms of scale, we seem to have become increasingly insignificant with advancing knowledge. The heavens have been stripped of their divinity and our common-sense notions of reality have been overthrown. In particular, atomic theory implies that objects are not as solid as previously believed and quantum theory implies that a microscopic system is probabilistic (i.e. described by a wave-function) until it is observed. This presents many interesting challenges for understanding the nature of reality. In particular, quantum theory shows that one cannot measure both position and velocity at the same time and that reality is fuzzy. Frustratingly, although relativity and quantum are known to be completely accurate in their respective domains, they are incompatible and resolving this problem is crucial to the search for a final theory of physics.

Attention then turned to the unification of the forces at work in nature and how this implies that additional (wrapped up) spatial dimensions may be required. In one model, the physical world is viewed as a 4-dimensional “brane” in a 5-dimensional “bulk”. This unification means that it is possible to view all of nature’s forces as manifestations of a single all-encompassing force. For example, electricity and magnetism are unified as part of electromagnetism. This is then unified with the weak force (associated with radioactive decay) as part of the electroweak interaction. At much higher energies this is unified with the strong force (binding atomic nuclei together) as part of a Grand Unified Theory (GUT). The unification with gravity at still higher energies may be achieved with M-theory.

Having described the latest state of physics, Bernard turned to the problem of how to introduce mind into physics. This involved input from other disciplines, including philosophy, psychology and neuroscience. Newtonian physics is mechanistic, in that it reduces the Universe to a machine, and the Cosmic Uroborus – as it stands - makes no reference to mind. The first hint that this may be inadequate comes from the Anthropic Principle. Although humans are no longer central to the Universe, this principle says that some features of the world are explained by the requirement that life and mind should arise. In particular, the Strong Anthropic Principle says that many fine tunings are required between the coupling constants (describing the strengths of the four forces) and various cosmological parameters. Bernard gave some examples of this – for example, how the production of carbon in stars relies on a finely tuned resonance between key elements. He stressed that these tunings are unexplained by mainstream physics. However, they are not specific to humans; they are just required if the Big Bang is to lead to increasing order of complexity, culminating in mind. This is reminiscent of the Evolution versus Intelligent Design debate, except that the existence of a Multiverse gives the Anthropic Principle a more respectable physical basis.

Bernard then reviewed different views of consciousness. Some scientists believe that this is just an excrement of the brain, probably irrelevant to physics and possibly just an illusion.

Others believe that consciousness must be a fundamental part of physics and perhaps even a new state of matter. A more radical view is that the brain is a filter rather than a producer of consciousness, in which case neuroscience will never be able to account for all aspects of experience. Indeed, there is a growing volume of evidence – described in Larry Dossey’s *One Mind* – that consciousness is a non-local unitary phenomenon. This gave an opportunity for participants to share some personal experiences and provide insights from their own professional fields. The different types of mental experience – subdivided into normal, paranormal and mystical – were represented in a graph of frequency (common to rare along the y-axis) versus impact (mundane to profound along the x-axis). So normal experiences (e.g. sensations and memories) were at the bottom left, paranormal ones (e.g. telepathy and clairvoyance) in the middle, and mystical ones (e.g. creative insights, religious epiphany and oceanic feelings) at the top right.

The next lecture focused on paranormal phenomena (psi) and the attempts to explain these theoretically. There are different kinds of theories – transpersonal, psychological, neurological, biological, chemical and physical – but the last is probably the most fundamental since physics underlies all of the sciences from a reductionist perspective. Reasons for connecting physics with psi were discussed and it was noted that both psychical research and physics would benefit from this. Indeed, physics may already be sufficiently exotic to accommodate psi.

Three types of physical theory were discussed: transmission models (where psi is due to some form of signal); quantum models (where non-local quantum entanglement is invoked); and higher dimensional models (going beyond 4-dimensional spacetime). The first seems implausible (because psi does not weaken with distance) and the second seems unsatisfactory because – while quantum theory is undoubtedly relevant to psi – nobody understands this anyway, so it does not give a complete explanation. He therefore turned to the third possibility, emphasising that one needs some form of communal non-physical space and extra dimensions of time (corresponding to different specious presents) to accommodate the full range of mental experiences.

Bernard closed by presenting his own unified model of matter, mind and spirit, stressing that there is a need for some revision of what is meant by these terms. His model invokes extra dimensions of space and time as part of what he calls a “Universal Structure”. Although there are many historical precedents for this approach (notably, Abbott’s “Flatland” and Zollner’s “Transcendental Physics” in the 19th century), it has become more popular in recent years because particle physicists now also invoke extra dimensions, so he relates these two ideas. Regardless of whether this particular paradigm is correct, one needs a form of science that goes beyond the one-level materialist paradigm. This supports the view that one needs some type of Post-Materialist Science

Eve Hicks
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Jan Arriens' Thoughts

In the first place, Bernard's presentations were a tour de force. His observations covered not just contemporary physics but also philosophy, psychology and religion, with music and humour thrown in, to provide a marvellous overview. Taking us as far as he could with regard to standard physics, Bernard then embarked on the conclusions he had reached about how consciousness, parapsychology and spiritual experiences might all be incorporated into a single model. So far, he has not felt able to do so professionally, as so much of his thinking is not just speculative but also highly controversial. Bernard freely admitted that his model could be incorrect, but at the very least it is a brave attempt to find a place for consciousness. His model may also force the scientific community to sit up and take notice – at best acting as a bridge between conventional science and those who are currently derided.

How far has or will Bernard Carr get? I was repeatedly struck by the similarities between his references to One Mind and interconnection, etc., with the Upanishads. "Brahman is the only truth, the world is unreal, and there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and Atman, individual self." Or: "That which cannot be apprehended by the mind, but by which the mind is apprehended – that alone know as Brahman."

I think that what Bernard says about the need to bring in mind and extra dimensions of time and space makes every sense when it comes to accommodating paranormal and mystical experience, and indeed completing a Grand Unifying Theory. The problem I am left with concerns how this is done. Once one posits mind as the missing factor, everything slots into place, but I think the reductionists will ask how this has been achieved. We are unable to define consciousness satisfactorily, let alone (I presume) put it into a mathematical formula other than as a symbol, or a kind of "balancing item". So I feel there was a jump from

needing mind to incorporating it. But then ultimately an element of mystery will remain, if only because we trying to look at consciousness from the inside.

And consciousness is the one thing that we can only look at from the inside; everything else we observe and analyse from the outside. Perhaps that is why it is so elusive and perhaps ultimately indefinable. But in the same way, we can only look at the universe, or the cosmic consciousness, from within. It may therefore be that we can never apprehend the entire Truth. At Frenchman's Cove we were like seekers climbing a mountain, some by the scientific path, others coming from a philosophical viewpoint and others again guided by personal experience of a mystical nature. All of these are valid in their own way. Bernard took us just about as far up the scientific path as possible. When I found the atmosphere getting rather rarefied, I took comfort from the fact that the authors of the Vedic writings of over two thousand years ago had come to essentially the same conclusions. These they had arrived at intuitively, with a feeling of rightness that is, I imagine, identical to that felt by the mathematician or physicist when things fall into place, at times seemingly in the absence of any agency of their own. I hope Bernard will feel emboldened to take his bold analysis into the public domain.

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Jan Arriens: *Jan Arriens is a semi-retired translator. In 1988 he founded the charity LifeLines, whose members correspond with prisoners on death row in the US. He has had a long-standing interest in mystical experience since his student days in Melbourne, where he was greatly influenced by Raynor Johnson.*

<https://explore.scimednet.org/index.php/frenchmans-cove-2017-the-cosmic-consciousness-connection/>





The World Congress of Faiths and Sarum College Promoting Spiritual Life: an interfaith perspective

“All We Need Is Love!”

Larry Culliford



Photograph of Thomas Merton. Used with permission of the Merton Legacy Trust and the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University.

Being at this day symposium felt something like déjà vu or time travel, issues raised and discussed being similar to those confronting the ‘Spirituality and Psychiatry’ special interest group (SIG) of the Royal College of Psychiatrists after its inception in the late 1990s, beginning with the question, ‘What is spirituality?’ In circumstances where colleagues, patients and their families came from many different world religions and none, the Executive Committee, led by Andrew Powell, sought to develop a language of spirituality acceptable to all. Rather than worry about Humpty Dumpty’s highly egocentric perspective, the idea of poet Aline Kilmer seems more useful: “Many excellent words are ruined by too definite knowledge of their meaning”. The SIG Committee’s response can be found online and in a popular free leaflet, ‘Spirituality and Mental Health’¹ that was published by the RCP in 2002 and has since been updated regularly.

Opening the day, **James Woodward** referred to spirituality as ‘an unreliable concept’; but it may be better considered an aspect of (right brain) experience rather than the product of (left brain) cognitive function. Spiritual experience, far from unreliable, affords trustworthy guidance, and is often transformative. ‘Something happens’ is a good way to put it. Whenever it does, the deeply personal aspect of the individual is communicating with a universal realm or reality, improving one’s awareness of a seamless and sacred connection to the divine, to nature, and to everyone else – living, deceased or to come.

Two sets of ideas help with clarity of thinking around the topic of spirituality. The first concerns five seamlessly inter-linked dimensions of human experience: *physical* (matter and energy), *biological* (life), *psychological* (thought, emotions, sensations, impulses to speech and action), *social* (interpersonal relations, group dynamics) and *spiritual* (an originating principle, creating, linking, shaping the other four: the miracles of existence, life, consciousness and love). Religions have important social as well as spiritual aspects, while personal spirituality is more concerned with the psychological dimension.

The second set of ideas involves seeing ‘life as a journey, where good and bad experiences can help you to learn, develop and mature’ as, for example, in ‘The Meaning of Life Diagram’,² where James Fowler’s 1981 ‘Six Stages of Faith’ have been comprehensively developed and renamed as: *Egocentric, Conditioning, Conformist, Individual, Integration and Universal*. There are different attitudes and priorities at each stage, which explains more about why disagreements arise (both between and within different faith groups) than do theological or cultural distinctions.

A preoccupation with consensus and uniformity, for example, derives from dualist stage three *conformist*, ‘Either/Or’, ‘Right/Wrong’, ‘Us/Them’ type thinking. Preference for a more personal level of involvement is consistent with the stage four *individual* approach, requiring people to take responsibility, thinking and acting for themselves. This leads on to the quieter, homecoming waters of stages five and six. Here, kinship with others is no longer a decision, but more like an inner imperative, based upon a recognisably shared reality and, consequently, an innate

disposition for compassion. This is where holistic, unitary, inclusive, ‘Both/And’ thinking and experience hold sway, the basis of true wisdom: thought, word and action (also silence and inaction) harnessed for the benefit of all, without discrimination.

The idea of immaturity, while uncomfortable, does speak of human potential for growth and ripening. The most fruitful conditions for spiritual development involve feeling secure, worthy and, especially, loved. There are many pathways to maturity. The Royal College leaflet suggests that, ‘a three-part daily routine can be helpful: i) a regular quiet time (for prayer, reflection or meditation); ii) study of religious/spiritual material; iii) making supportive friendships with others with similar spiritual/religious aims and aspirations’. Seeking out a sympathetic and mature guide, guru or mentor may also be helpful (but caution: beware of false prophets, spiritual materialism, etc.).

Inter-faith dialogue, communication and fraternisation can also be of remarkable benefit. Take, for example, the meetings over three days in 1968 of the Cistercian monk and spiritual writer Thomas Merton with the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Merton later wrote, “I felt we had become very good friends... There is a real spiritual bond between us”. His Holiness reciprocated, speaking later of the “profound spirituality and love” in Merton’s eyes.

Spirituality knows no boundaries, and love is one of its key concepts, breaking down barriers, building bridges of faith, understanding and acceptance. Whereas terms like ‘Christian spirituality’, ‘Muslim spirituality’, even ‘Humanist spirituality’, do have meaning, they hark back to stage three, conformist (left brain) thinking, very helpful, but only as a platform for integration into something greater, something universal, something recognizable through intuition, even if beyond the reach of mere words.

This is where – individually and collectively – humanity is headed, according to De Chardin, through personal and social evolution towards the Omega Point. The World Congress of Faiths and Sarum College are undoubtedly playing their part. Faith, courage, hope, patience and perseverance are required; and the continued promotion of spiritual over material values in all corners of society. Shared discussion and dialogue, can be important, but so too are silence, stillness, contemplation and prayer. Being and doing; Mary and Martha: both are of value. Clock time (*chronos*) is less significant in the search for wisdom than God’s time (*kairos*). As the Book of Proverbs³ has it: “*Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight*”. Alternatively, as the Beatles once advised: “*All we need is love*”.

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¹ www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/treatmentswellbeing/spirituality.aspx

² www.maneyonline.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1179/2044024314Z.00000000019

³ Proverbs 9:6.



Report of AHT/ SMN joint one-day conference

18th June 2016 at the Essex Unitarian Church in Kensington, London W8.

John Franklin

The theme of this year's summer conference was *Health and Spirituality*, at which we welcomed as speakers, Revd Dr Jeff Leonardi and Dr Peter Fenwick. Chaired by Rowena Rudkin, Chair of the AHT London Group and Dr Bernard Carr, the day included the two principal talks in the morning, and an open Panel discussion in the afternoon, Dr Leonardi and Dr Fenwick being joined for this event by Dr Natalie Tobert and Dr Dagmar Corry. Attendance at the conference was a little on the low side, with just 23 delegates present, but the event was most successful, with the talks generating much interest and discussion



Revd. Dr Jeff Leonardi, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Wales Trinity St David, Lampeter, PhD on Person Centred approach to spirituality, started with a few words about his work at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and the current seminar series being run there on 'Spirituality and Health'. In his talk, *Counselling,*

Health and Spirituality, he said his personal and professional journey had the underlying theme of integrating Christian faith and spirituality with the 'person-centred' approach to counselling and other human relationships. He gave a working definition of the term 'spirituality' as that which gives meaning, value and purpose to a person's life – going on to develop a broader, twelve-point, definition of spirituality. He talked of an interesting overlap in research into the outcomes for individuals of significant spiritual experiences and effective counselling and psychotherapy – outcome of successful therapy, being where a person moves away from *fixity* of feelings, conceptions and behaviour towards openness, and honesty with regard to self, God and others. Recognising that many people are moving away from the Church, he stressed, though, the importance of belonging and of ritual to many people.

Jeff discussed genuineness or authenticity in therapeutic relationships, especially within a religious context, saying it is vital for well-being that one has solid friendships with people with whom one can relax and be oneself, without fear of judgement and criticism. He said that whilst many clergy do not have such relationships, a new culture can be found in many dioceses now, where mutual (and specialist) support is encouraged. He said his own dedication is to the person-centred approach to counselling instigated by Carl Rogers, where importance is given to authenticity or congruence. The therapeutic progress has the client moving away from incongruence towards congruence i.e. towards accurate understanding of their inner state – and to 'unconditional positive regard', where the therapist offers to the client an attitude of complete acceptance and warm valuing. He stressed the profoundly spiritual dimension to this quality of acceptance, and that health, wholeness and spirituality are intimately related within the psychological paradigm of the person-centred approach. He ended by saying that, from a psycho-therapeutic perspective, spirituality is so clearly to be viewed as constituting a primary dimension of wholeness, health and well-being.



Dr Peter Fenwick took as the subject of his talk, *The significance of meditation practices in our understanding of spirituality. A new thrust towards health.* In a well-illustrated talk, he said that meditation has moved from being the domain of the odd-ball scientific researcher

to a widely-used instrument for promoting health-care. He said his interest in meditation dated back to 1969, and he identified two strands of effect – increase in physical and mental well-being, and increase in spiritual experience. This led to an interest in consciousness and the question, what is consciousness? Defining consciousness, he said there were two states – duality and non-duality: duality as experienced in ordinary life, the subject-object world, but also experience, or consciousness, of all as unity, non-duality – a physics of the interconnected universe where you live in the moment only, which Peter defined as 'Unitary consciousness', which may be experienced in a meditation state, or as an individual one-off spiritual or religious experience.

He defined spirituality as spiritual seeking, a search for and experience of the divine (separate from religion) and meditation as a technique for cleaning the mind, enhancing the physical body and its environment – a process of 'awakening', and a passage from 'Consciousness' to 'Unitary consciousness'. He defined several types of meditation: loving-kindness meditation, mindfulness meditation, visualisation meditation, a withdrawal of the senses – and described the benefits of meditation as helping to prolong life; reducing anxiety, hypertension and drug abuse in a clinical situation; and helping deepen spiritual experience.

Peter ended by asking the question: how many of us want to awaken? – how many of us want to deepen our spiritual experiences?

Open Panel discussion:

Discussion centred on various topics, including meditation and spiritual awakening, the nature of non-duality and removal of the ego – and the purpose of meditation, with a question of when it should be introduced to schools and prisons.

The Church's view of psychical matters was raised, that this seemed generally negative, with little information to help the Church – no manual or compendium. This led to distinction between religion and spirituality; a rejection of religion and dogma, but a search for meaning, with many people on a spiritual journey; and an acknowledgement that religion allowed us to live on a communal level and not just as individuals in isolation.

The speakers, panel and the audience were warmly thanked for their participation, and Bernard was thanked for chairing the panel discussion – and the meeting was then brought to a close with thanks being given to the Essex Unitarian Church for its hospitality and all who had participated in making the day the success that it was.

[A transcript of the talk by Dr Jeff Leonardi, and a note and PDF of Dr Peter Fenwick's presentation are available, and can be sent by e-mail attachment on request.

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