

► TOWARDS A NEW RENAISSANCE

The Newsletter of the Scientific and Medical Network

► EDITORIAL

From Gain of Function to Gain of Wisdom

BY DAVID LORIMER



A number of years ago, our President Bernard Carr organised a meeting in Cambridge on the multiverse, where Prof Keith Ward from Oxford was commenting on Richard Dawkins's assertion that religions are dangerous. No, he said, it's human beings who are dangerous.

There has been much debate about the origins of Covid-19 and many competing narratives around the inherent uncertainties. The overall context, however, is clear: it is the so-called gain of function (GOF) research where the object is to enhance the deadliness and transmissibility of a virus. The Wuhan Laboratory is one of the leading facilities in this respect, and has received research grants from the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID). The Obama administration suspended this research for safety reasons in 2014, but it was reinstated with new guidelines in 2017.

The research rationale is preventative and defensive: the need to know how to prevent pandemics and defend yourself against enemy intent. However, for the putative enemy, your biosecurity is potentially a cover for the development of offensive bioweapons. Kenneth Bernard, a biodefence expert, puts it like this: 'Defending against biothreats by developing countermeasures looks a lot like an offensive bioweapons programme' to some countries.

The result is that each country projects their own fear and shadow on the other. As with nuclear deterrence, the logic is one of mutually assured destruction (MAD). However, genuine security can only arise from the building of trust, which includes trust by the people in the integrity of their

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▶ FEATURED BLOG



The Modern Platonist

[This anonymous blog](#) (part of the 'Interfaith Now' community on Medium) features topics that fall within the category of Platonic philosophy, including articles about Epicurus, Nietzsche's Superman, syncretism, monotheism and much more. Below is an excerpt taken from *Jesus According to the Gospel of Thomas*.

'The Gospel of Thomas is a collection of 114 sayings of Jesus. In these sayings, there is no mention of the miracles, the crucifixion, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus — and naturally the dogma of the Trinity is absent. The Gospel of Thomas presents the Jesus of Wisdom, not the Jesus of Faith. Thus, Jesus becomes the enlightened teacher who imparts wisdom. These sayings are elaborated according to the Greek tradition but also the Jewish tradition of the logoi sophon – the 'sayings of the sages.' Read the article [here](#).

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governments. This is where a culture of secrecy comes in. Intelligence services around the world pursue covert operations on behalf of their governments on the basis of 'plausible deniability'. If people actually knew everything that is going on behind the scenes, they would undoubtedly protest and governments could not continue this kind of activity that they regard essential to their national interests.

The same secrecy/transparency dilemma applies to gain of function research. There is a worldwide community of virologists whose livelihoods depend on its continuation and who naturally do not want to see the applecart upended. These same people sit on government advisory panels like the US National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB). They fear that if the review process is opened up

"It's time for us as a species to address our collective shadows, fears and mistrust."

to the scrutiny of ethicists, scientists and the general public, then the whole project will grind to a halt and all the high security BSL labs will be closed down. Hence, the incentive to keep things confidential on a need-to-know basis.

Such closure would be amply justified simply on the basis of the precautionary principle, which we use in defence but not yet for environmental security, despite many years of advocacy. On ethical grounds, this is surely a collective imperative, as advocated by Francis Boyle, a lawyer involved in drafting bioweapons legislation. He is adamant that all BSL3 and BSL4 laboratories must be closed down and all biowarfare work with lethal pathogens ceased. 'They are all existentially dangerous,' he says. 'This is a catastrophe waiting to happen. And it is now happened.'

It's time for us as a species to address our collective shadows, fears and mistrust. As Dr Andrew Powell remarks: 'Covid-19 may be the bullet but, of course, we, the human species, created the gun.' Let's reframe the terms of the discussion beyond gain of function and start addressing gain of wisdom instead. To quote Deuteronomy: 'I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.' 

► VIDEOS OF NOTE

Max Velmans: *Is this Universe Conscious?*

This talk by Prof Max Velmans, given at a seminar on 7th July, 2020, suggests a different way to understand the diverse ways in which humans and other sentient beings are natural expressions of a reflexive, self-observing universe and the many ways in which this universe might be conscious. The presentation then introduces different ways to explore the ground of being, and makes connections with Eastern as well as Western philosophy. Find the full presentation [here](#).



Elisabet Sahtouris: *Humanity Rising* interview

Elisabet Sahtouris is an evolutionary biologist and Honorary Member of the SMN. In this video, part of the ongoing series of *Humanity Rising* events, she shares with host Jim Garrison ‘her vision of how we can attain sustainable health and well-



being within the larger living systems of Earth and the cosmos.’

Here is more from the introduction: ‘*The pandemic has originated out of nature. Humanity has been brought to a standstill by a microbe. The pandemic thus challenges us to understand afresh our relationship with*

the larger ecosystem, otherwise our civilization will founder and our species could become extinct.’ Watch the full presentation [here](#). And sign up for *Humanity Rising* [here](#).

► FEATURED BLOG



Suzanne Taylor: *Kindness is Coming into Vogue*

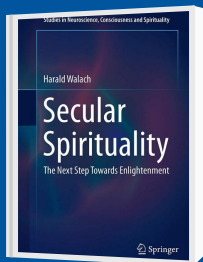
In this blog, Suzanne Taylor refers to an article published by the LA Times about the launching of the UCLA Bedari Kindness Institute, the first interdisciplinary research of its kind (no pun intended). Its ultimate goal is to spread kindness and promote a more humane world by developing techniques to help practice kindness through online programmes, lectures, media outreach and the free app called UCLA Mindful. Read the full blog [here](#).

You might also like to support the UCLA Bedari Kindness Institute and engage with like-minded people by joining the newly established Vote Kindness Facebook group [here](#).

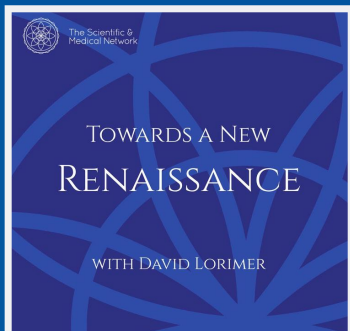


▶ THE BOOKCAST

Secular and Mystical Spirituality



This episode reviews two books on spirituality, the first, *Secular Spirituality*, by Harald Walach, and the second, *Belonging to God*, by Will Keepin. Both are important contributions to the field of science and spirituality with an emphasis on inner experience as a means of accessing other levels of reality, as one sees, for instance, in near-death experiences. Harald's book provides a lot of historical background, with some fascinating insights into Roger Bacon, while Will draws on 35 years of spiritual practice while also referring to classic mystical texts in a number of traditions. Listen to the episode [here](#).



Find the full bookcast on [RedCircle](#), [Apple podcasts](#), [Spotify](#) and [Stitcher](#).

▶ ARTICLES OF NOTE

Frank Furedi: *A Disaster without Precedent*

Prof Frank Furedi is a sociologist and social commentator who is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Kent, and is widely cited for his views on the difficulties of engaging with risk and uncertainty. [Here](#) he argues that Covid-19 is a disaster without precedent - not primarily in terms of the disease itself, but in terms of how we have responded to it.

'The impact of Covid-19 on people's lives and on economic, social and global relations, both now and in the future, is likely to be more far-reaching than any other previous public-health crisis. Not even during the First World War or the Second World War did governments feel the need to close schools. The application of emergency measures in response to Covid-19 is unparalleled in peacetime.' Full article [here](#).

Deepak Chopra: *Is Reincarnation Actually Real?*

In this interesting article, Deepak Chopra quotes a recent poll where 33% of Americans report a belief in reincarnation. He points out that in modern secular society, the question of survival of bodily death has been channelled into belief vs science, a framework that he finds unhelpful as a *'false divide'*. He points out that a great deal of credible research on the topic has been carried out at the University of Virginia (we have Jim Tucker giving a talk on this in the autumn), proposing that *'if everything is recycling under the influence of creativity, memory and imagination, it seems very likely that human consciousness participates in the same recycling'* - an intriguing thought. Full article [here](#).

Quote

"Humanity is now too clever to survive without wisdom"
— E.F. Schumacher (Late SMN)



The lightened view

A Zen student asked his master: 'Is it okay to use email?' 'Yes,' came the reply, 'but no attachments!'

► UPCOMING EVENTS ONLINE

Jonathon Porritt on climate change and more...

- **Tuesday, August 25, 7:30-9:30pm.**
Sir Jonathon Porritt, CBE: **Hope in Hell**
- **Thursday, September 3, 5-7pm CET.**
Humanity Rising, with Prof Chris Bache, Dr Suzanne Zeedyck, Sabine Lichtenfels, Thomas Huebl, Colm Holland: **Love, Trauma and the Alchemy of Transformation**
- **Friday, September 4, 7-8.30pm.**
Panel Webinar with IONS - David Lorimer, Dr Marilyn Schlitz, Dr Peter Fenwick, Dr Karen Wyatt: **Lessons for Life and Living from Death and Dying**

Find more details at www.mysticsandscientists.org.

Recent webinars - recordings now available!

These are all now available to view for Network members.

- **Dr Serge Beddington-Behrens: Speeding up our Evolution in a Corona Affected World**
- **Riane Eisler interview: Nurturing our Humanity: how Domination and Partnership Shape our Brains, Lives and Future**
- **Prof John Clarke: Beyond Nihilism: what can we learn from Nietzsche?**
- **Dr Robert Verkerk: The Great Disconnect - Why so many think a Covid Vaccine is our only Option**

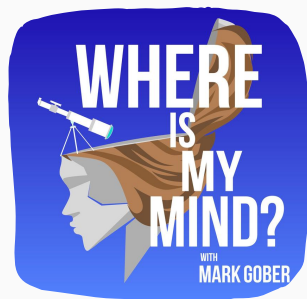
For details see www.mysticsandscientists.org.

► FEATURED PODCAST

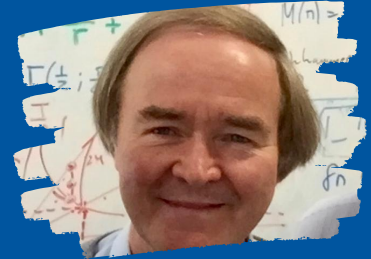
Mark Gober: Where is my Mind?

BY DAVID LORIMER

Where does your 'mind' come from? Easy answer: Your brain...right? Think again. *Where Is My Mind?* explores a revolutionary hypothesis: What if consciousness comes from outside the body? The show host is Mark Gober, a consciousness researcher and author of *An End to Upside Down Thinking*, who also happens to be a former Wall Street banker. And in addition to [his free podcast](#), if you register on [Mark's website](#) (£25, paid once) you can see 50 more interviews - many with [Galileo Commission](#) advisers.



► SMN VIDEO CLIPS



Bernard Carr:

Consciousness and Cosmology

In this interview by Jeffrey Mishlove, SMN President Prof Bernard Carr talks about his professional interests in psychical research, physics and cosmology, and tells how his own interest in the paranormal was stimulated by a series of out-of-body experiences. You can find the interview [here](#).

► TOWARDS A NEW RENAISSANCE

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Disclaimer: The selections in this newsletter are personal - the Network has no consensus view on the material covered. Readers need to draw their own conclusions on the basis of evidence and reason.

For all enquiries click [here](#).
Site: explore.scimednet.org

▶ HELP US NURTURE
AND GROW TANR!



We are excited to bring you *Towards a New Renaissance* every month and the responses we have received to the newsletter have been brilliant.

If you have been enjoying this monthly digest of David Lorimer's editorials, featured blogs, suggested videos and articles – and of course, David's ongoing 'bookcast' of spoken reviews, then would you consider making a supportive donation?

Any amount would be a great help toward our costs of time and labour. And a regular donation – even as little as £3–£5 a month – can allow us to plan ahead with new ways to bring you great content.

Click here to choose a donation level via PayPal - and thank you!

[Donate](#)

▶ JOIN THE SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL NETWORK...

...AND ENJOY ACCESS TO THE RECORDINGS OF ALL OUR RECENT ONLINE EVENTS

The last six months of global lockdown have seen a sharp increase in high-quality online events and presentations, and the Scientific and Medical Network has been fully participating in this wave of activity. As a result we are delighted to be able to offer our members a growing number of excellent webinar recordings as a part of their full membership package. Just a few of these are below:


MYSTICS & SCIENTISTS EXTRA 2020
ONE MIND, ONE PLANET, ONE HEALTH

ANDREW FELLOWS

**COVID-19 CLIMATE CHAOS
& THE NEED FOR METANOIA**

A TRANS-DISCIPLINARY GUIDE

Join joint Network Book Prize 2019 winner Andrew Fellows as he gives a fascinating presentation on how understanding different levels of individual and collective consciousness can provide important insights into our ecological predicament.



July 4, 2020 · 10AM - 1PM BST
www.mysticsandscientists.org

MYSTICS & SCIENTISTS EXTRA 2020
ONE MIND, ONE PLANET, ONE HEALTH

THE POWER OF THE SACRED FEMINE

Anaiya Sophia

Christine Page, MD

Session 1: Goddesses, Mystics and Holy Women

Session 2: Embodying the Sacred Feminine

The Scientific & Medical Network


May 16, 2020 · Session 1: 10-12PM BST · Session 2: 4-6PM BST
www.mysticsandscientists.org

MYSTICS & SCIENTISTS EXTRA 2020
ONE MIND, ONE PLANET, ONE HEALTH

LARS MUHL

THE GOD FORMULA

In this webinar I will share with you some of my most profound findings from many years of studying the Essene Mystery School, Yohanan the Baptist, Yeshua the Nazarene and Mariam the Magdalene and their teachings. The main key to these teachings, I found in the Aramaic language of the Essenes, Yeshua and Mariam.



JULY 16TH 19:30 - 21:30 BST · 11:30 - 13:30 PST · 14:30 - 16:30 EST
www.mysticsandscientists.org

MYSTICS & SCIENTISTS EXTRA 2020
ONE MIND, ONE PLANET, ONE HEALTH

DR ROB VERKERK

**THE GREAT
DISCONNECT
WHY SO MANY
THINK A COVID
VACCINE IS OUR
ONLY OPTION**

Could the siloing of science and medicine be narrowing our possible responses to the virus? Come and hear Dr Verkerk's radical analysis



Thursday, 13 August, 2020 · 7:30-9:30 PM (BST)
www.mysticsandscientists.org

Join today with an annual subscription of just £60! As well as access to all recorded webinars you'll also receive other member benefits, such as our journal, *Paradigm Explorer*, posted three times a year. Be part of a community of people enquiring into the most significant scientific and spiritual questions of our age. **Click below for full details.**

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