

CONFER

Spiritual narratives

IN PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPIES

- the nature of spiritual experience, self and consciousness
- embodied spiritual experience and brain function
- distinguishing between healthy and disturbed or psychotic spiritual experience
- spiritual experience and object relations
- concerns about splitting, boundaries and experiences of one-ness
- containment of patients in spiritual crisis
- developmental journeys and the search for meaning
- mindfulness: a new methodology for integrating psychological and spiritual disciplines?

4 AND 5 APRIL 2007
ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

Introduction

In his abstract Dr Peter Fenwick points out that over 100 medical schools in America have spirituality as an item on their curriculum, for spiritual awareness and a compassionate lifestyle resulting from spiritual practices are found to be protective against serious illness. Healthy spirituality, offering a sense of connection to a much greater whole and a meaning for both existence and suffering – together with practices shared with others – is manifestly good for physical and mental health.

Many psychotherapy clients or patients will talk about their spiritual needs and experiences over the course of a therapy. These may often signal an increase in emotional well-being – a new sense of safety and meaningfulness in life. However, a sudden spiritual crisis or an ungrounded mystical experience, perhaps involving a heightened perception of the divine or the universe - particularly one experienced in isolation - may be a warning to the practitioner that their client or patient is in a danger zone that extends beyond the normal boundaries of self and reality.

The spiritual values of care, contemplation and compassion underpin psychotherapeutic practice. But how do we best serve those needs and relate to such events with confidence and therapeutic skill? What is needed from the psychotherapist by the patient who has reached a spiritual crossroads, an unexpected experience of the divine, or a sudden loss (or discovery) of meaning in their life? Is this aspect of life considered to be essentially psychological or beyond the scope of therapy?

This conference offers an exceptionally rich programme, bringing together practitioners from diverse faith and theoretical backgrounds to explore the themes.



The Retreat Element

So often at conferences we become stimulated but also overtired. In order to make this event restoring as well as stimulating we are offering a parallel space each day for participants who would like to spend time in an experiential session based on yoga and meditation. These experiential groups will be led by Sue Staziker. There will also be an optional social dreaming matrix and an experiential workshop on the mandalic symbol of wholeness, both led by Laurie Slade. On the Wednesday evening there is a performance of the St John's Passion in King's College Chapel. Tickets will be on sale from February 6th @ £35 from the Corn Exchange (Tel: 01223 357851)

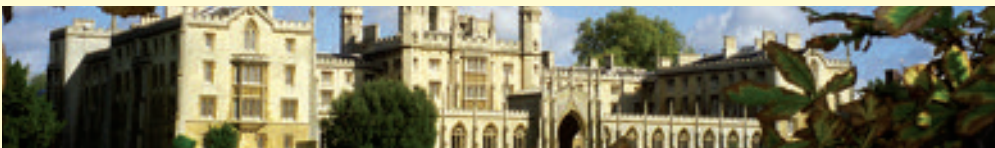
Easter Break

We have chosen two days for this event that immediately precede the holiday weekend – Wednesday 4th and Thursday 5th April. We envisage this event as a wonderful way to begin your spring holiday, in the beautiful parklands surrounding St John's College, punting or exploring the historic town between sessions.



The Venue

We wanted to find a venue for this conference that would be inspiring in itself, and which would reflect the subject matter in some way. The College of St John the Evangelist, founded in 1511, is set on the banks of the River Cam and is one of the most beautiful colleges in Cambridge, with sublime architecture, sheltered courtyards, and beautiful gardens. Participants coming to Cambridge especially for the event have the option of staying in the comfortable, ensuite college bedrooms in one of the historical buildings. Lunch and dinner will be taken in the 16th century dining hall.



Day 1 - Wednesday 4th April

10.0 Dr Peter Fenwick

Spirituality, brain function and good health

The 21st century has opened with a rising interest in spirituality. Over 100 medical schools in the USA now have spiritual medicine courses and the same trend is starting in the UK. It has been found that a loving and compassionate lifestyle is protective against cancers and heart disease, and that a positive outlook enhances the immune system. There is now good neuroscience evidence that many of the ecstatic meditative states produce demonstrable changes in brain function. This data suggests that how you conduct your life is important and equally important for those around you.

11.0 Coffee

11.30 Small Groups (please choose one)

Option A Margaret Landale

The body as a resource in spiritual practice and psychotherapy

The body is an essential resource both in psychotherapy and spiritual practice offering access to direct, moment by moment experience. In this workshop we will explore how mindful inquiry into sensory and felt experience can promote qualities such as acceptance, compassion and equanimity and how breath awareness and breath control can help emotional self regulation. The workshop will combine practical exercises, clinical vignettes and discussion especially regarding the implications of this work for the therapeutic relationship.

Option B Christopher McKenna

The patient's struggle with issues of existence and dying and the psychotherapist's role in that process.

To what extent do the therapist's personal beliefs about life and death influence the course of therapy? There is an ambiguity in the psychotherapeutic tradition. On the one hand, it is often claimed that the therapist's role is simply to provide a space and a certain quality of containment and reflection within which the patient can find his or her own adjustment to issues of life and death. On the other hand, as Freud and Jung attest and as Peter Homans and others have illustrated, the psychoanalytic tradition itself arose as a response to the collapse, for many people, of the possibility of religious faith; Freud stated that he was attempting to found a new form of care of souls, which need not be practiced by doctors, and should not be practiced by priests. This workshop will explore the idea that psychoanalysis is driven by its own, implicit, metaphysic; and will compare this metaphysic with other forms of religious and spiritual belief.

Option C Reinhard Kowalski

Spiritual Practice and meditation as psychological maps of the mind

We will consider spiritual practice and meditation as an attainable form of psychological healing, leading to 'spiritual intelligence'. Using the Yogic concept of "outer mind and inner mind" we will consider object relations theory, splitting and boundaries as models for meditation practices. We will examine and experience the value of meditation as a psycho-social-spiritual practice and as an effective tool in our psychotherapy practice.

Option D Dr Sarah Egger

Assessment of the patient's spiritual needs

Psychiatric patients consistently identify spiritual needs as an important issue, and most agree that spiritual care contributes to relief of their symptoms and an increased sense of well-being. If we follow

the evidence, then psychological care should routinely include a careful and sympathetic assessment or 'spiritual screening'. This workshop will provide an introduction to the topic and offer participants the opportunity to learn how to take a spiritual history.

Option E Yoga-Meditation Group led by Sue Staziker

These 4 experiential sessions will focus on strengthening boundaries of the self while opening the heart centre. Each will be slightly different, developing that theme at a physical, psychological and spiritual level. Participants will need comfortable, loose clothing and a mat.

13.0 Lunch

14.0 Michal Levin

**Transcending and Including the Boundaries of Psychotherapy:
A development journey towards spirituality**

This talk sets out an extended framework for considering the search for meaning, which includes states of consciousness, and deeper dimensions. It examines the experience of growth on multiple, developmental, and perhaps previously uncharted levels.

15.0 Tea

15.30 Small Groups (please choose one)

Option A Elizabeth McCormick

Compassion in the vessel of Relationship – PART I

This workshop will explore how the spiritual values of love, compassion, joy and equanimity may be understood, and misunderstood, within the therapeutic encounter.

Option B Dr John Rowan

Religion, spirituality, transpersonal, New Age? How to distinguish?

This whole field can be very confusing, and it seems to help if we can use the map provided by Ken Wilber to clarify it and lay down some boundaries when working with clients suffering from spiritual uncertainty. Then we can use a common clear language to discuss whatever we want to discuss.

Option C Ann Shearer

The Search for Meaning: psychotherapeutic responses

Jung thought that the loss of meaning was at the root of much neurosis, and the restoration of meaning was central to his therapeutic approach. Do we agree? This workshop will explore a Jungian approach to spirituality within psychotherapy and some of the questions it raises.

Option D Further discussion with Michal Levin

Option E Yoga-Meditation Group led by Sue Staziker

17.0 End

Wednesday Evening options

- 5.30** **Option A - Laurie Slade**
Experiential workshop exploring mandalas and mandalic process
In this workshop we will explore mandalic images from different cultures, along with some of Jung's thoughts on the universality of the mandala as a symbol of wholeness. We will identify certain qualities of the mandala, emphasising the dynamic process it embodies. Participants will have an opportunity to explore this process for themselves, through practical application of the imagery.
- 5.30** **Option B - Yoga-Meditation Group led by Sue Staziker**
- 7.0** **Drinks reception** (Included in residential fee)
- 7.30** **Bach's St John Passion, performed in Kings College Chapel**
Tickets available from February 6th for £35 from the Corn Exchange: 01223 357851
- OR**
- 8.00** **Conference dinner** (Included in residential fee)

Day 2 Thursday 5th April

- 8.30** **Social Dreaming Matrix led by Laurie Slade**
In the dream matrix, we are invited to share dreams and our associations to them, making connections where possible. We do not attempt to interpret a dream for the dreamer or to seek a 'correct' response. Once a dream is offered there can be as many associations as there are people in the room. At times we may sense a common theme or pattern emerging.
- 10.0** **Isabel Clarke**
Beyond the frontiers of reason; how the therapist can nurture healthy spirituality and avoid the psychotic danger zone.
The idea of life as a journey, and the therapist as one who supports and accompanies is not new. Some life journeys lead through experience that is 'beyond the frontiers of reason' and the individual is open to another sort of reality. In common with the mystical experiences reported in the spiritual literature of many cultures, this opening often occurs as a response to crisis or impasse. This session will explore the role of such spiritual crises in the human experience and consider how, as psychotherapists, we can safely support and contain those undergoing such crises; though the outcome can be life enhancing and transformative, the course can be terrifying and disintegrating, and there are real dangers.
- 11.0** **Coffee**
- 11.30** **Small Groups (please choose one)**
- Option A** **Isabel Clarke – further discussion**
- Option B** **Elizabeth McCormick**
Compassion in the vessel of Relationship – PART II
This workshop will continue to explore how the spiritual values of love, compassion, joy and equanimity may be understood, and misunderstood, within the therapeutic encounter.

Option C Chris McKenna

The Search for the Good Object in God

Since the Enlightenment, two kinds of fundamentalist have emerged: the believer and the atheist. Both speak as if God is an entity whose properties can be defined, either as an object or a projection. I belong to an older tradition, within the Christian scheme of things, which privileges unknowing. In this view, what matters is not knowing about God - since God is ultimately unknowable - but, rather, entering into an experience of the divine. One approach to the divine, from a psychological point of view, is to see the quest for God as the quest for a whole (good/loving) object, without having to know whether this object is internal or external to us. This quest can be pursued both by psychotherapeutic and by religious means, and in the working out of this quest we ourselves become more whole/loving/good. This workshop will examine some of the ways in which traditional psychotherapeutic and religious understandings may assist, or distort, this quest.

Option D Professor Les Lancaster

How can spiritual maps guide us through a crisis of meaning?

A spiritual map that represents the stages of a spiritual journey (for example, a mandala in the Jungian tradition, the tree of life in Judaism, or stations of the cross in Christianity) can be enormously helpful, especially for a client who is floating in a disconnected space or facing some kind of spiritual emergency. How can these maps be applied within psychotherapy? We will explore the value of their application in charting a psychotherapy client through a spiritual transition. We will also explore their limitation when they are rigidly conformed to and fundamentalist tendencies develop.

Option E Yoga-Meditation Group led by Sue Staziker

13.0 Lunch

14.0 Professor Les Lancaster

Through darkness to light: on suffering and authenticity in the psycho-spiritual journey.

In this presentation I will explore Jewish and kabbalistic mystical themes in which there is a passage from darkness to light as a solution to suffering, drawing on cognitive neuroscience and concepts in narrative psychology. I will develop an approach to therapeutic dialogue that analyses suffering as way the mind indexes experience and spiritual practice as a re-working of the index. A psycho-spiritual path is one which expands the index beyond the constriction of 'I' (from darkness), so that it embraces a transpersonal dimension (to light). Personal suffering becomes a vehicle for extending the narrative we live by into one that incorporates the suffering of 'God'. Following the kabbalistic myth, such suffering arises out of the desire of the transcendent to become immanent, and subsequent healing is effected through the work of creation and the achieving of partnership and dialogue with an other.

15.0 Whole group discussion

What is the role of psychological therapy in the spiritual development of the individual patient or client? What do have to offer? What do we need to learn?

15.45 End of conference

Speakers

Isabel Clarke is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist, currently employed as Psychological Therapies Lead in a new NHS Acute Inpatient Unit (Woodhaven, New Forest). She has published, organised conferences and given talks in the area of Psychosis and Spirituality. Details of her publications and activities can be found on her web site: www.scispirit.com/Psychosis_Spirituality/

Dr Sarah Eagger is Chair of the Special Interest Group in Spirituality and Psychiatry at the Royal College of Psychiatrists. She is especially interested in the spiritual aspect of the holistic model and has practiced and taught meditation in various NHS settings for many years. With a longstanding interest in integrated medicine, she is past Chair of the British Holistic Medical Association.

Dr. Peter Fenwick is a consultant neuropsychiatrist who has specialised in neuropsychiatric epilepsy unit at the Maudsley Hospital and the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford. He has a longstanding interest in neuroscience, brain function and altered states of consciousness. He has researched brain function using Magneto-encephalography and is carrying out research programmes on near death and end of life experiences.

Les Lancaster is the UK's first full Professor of Transpersonal Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University where he co-directs the Consciousness and Transpersonal Psychology Research Unit. He is also an Honorary Research Fellow in the Centre for Jewish Studies at Manchester University. He is a frequent broadcaster and his most recent book is *The Essence of Kabbalah and Approaches to Consciousness: the Marriage of Science and Mysticism*.

Margaret Landale is an integrative psychotherapist (UKCP), an experienced workshop facilitator and public speaker and has been Training Director at the Chiron Center for Body Psychotherapy, London. She has a longstanding meditation and yoga practice and incorporates psycho-spiritual aspects in her work.

Reinhard Kowalski is a consultant clinical psychologist in the NHS and a psychotherapist and supervisor in private practice, with 25 years experience. In his work he integrates Western psychology, Eastern spirituality and the Energy Psychology approaches of EFT and Seemorg Matrix. His 'Mind-balancing' meditation programme is taught widely in Europe. His recent books include *The Only Way out is In*. (Jon Carpenter Publishing, 2001) and *Yoga der Gefuehle* (Windpferd Verlag, 2004).

Michal Levin has been recognized internationally as an acclaimed intuitive, spiritual wisdom teacher, and author for more than 15 years. Originally a BBC Newsnight presenter and journalist she now teaches faculty at Penn State Medical School and Notre Dame University. She has written for several newspapers and is the author of four books including *Spiritual Intelligence* (Hodder and Stoughton) and *Meditation - Path to the Deeper Self* (Dorling Kindersley).

Christopher MacKenna is an Anglican priest and a Senior Member of the Jungian Analytic Section of the British Association of Psychotherapists. Currently, he works as Director of St Marylebone Healing & Counselling Centre, in London; and as Chaplain to the Guild of Health. He is particularly interested in thinking about the psychology of religious experience.

Elizabeth Wilde McCormick has been a psychotherapist for over twenty years. Her background is in social psychiatry, humanistic, transpersonal psychology, mindfulness based psychotherapy and cognitive analytic therapy. She was, with Nigel Wellings, Director of Training at the Centre for Transpersonal Psychology in London. She is the author of a number of books, most recently, with Nigel Wellings, *Nothing To Lose, Psychotherapy, Buddhism and Living Life*.

Dr John Rowan is one of the pioneers of transpersonal psychology in this country, and has written much in the field. His latest book is *The Transpersonal: Spirituality in psychotherapy and counselling* (Second edition) from Routledge.

Ann Shearer works as a Jungian analyst and teaches on different psychotherapy training courses. She was formerly a journalist, most recently as Editor of The Guardian's Society Tomorrow pages. She has a particular interest in myth as a bridge between psychology and religion. Her writings have been described as luminous, challenging and mythic.

Laurie Slade is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist working in private practice. He is a member of the Guild of Psychotherapists, the Confederation of Analytical Psychologists and the International Neuro-Psychoanalysis Society. He has been exploring social dreaming for the past 7 years in a variety of settings. His paper "Social Dreaming for a Queer culture" was published in *Self and Society* (November 2005).

Sue Staziker has been teaching yoga for 25 years. Her training has involved working with Iyengar teachers and she is registered with the British Wheel of Yoga. More recently she has become more involved with the therapeutic aspects of yoga and its healing potential. Her own training encouraged her to develop all the different aspects of yoga – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual – all of which she thinks are equally important.

Booking form

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone Number _____

Email _____

Occupation _____

I would like to register for the following: (please tick)

- 2 days full residential
 2 days non-residential
 1 day non-residential
 Additional night

I am selecting the following small group options:

AM 4th April Option A B C D E

PM 4th April Option A B C D E

EVE 4th April Option A B

AM 5th April Option A B C D E

Dream Matrix

I enclosing the full fee of £

I enclosing a deposit of £100

Cheques are payable to Confer Ltd

OR

Please deduct £ _____ from card number

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Master Card Visa Switch

Expiry date ____/____/____ Issue number _____ (Switch only)

Date of application ____/____/____

INVOICING

I am being funded by an organisation.

I have been given the following purchase order: _____

Please send an invoice to _____

Please return with payment to:

Confer, 36a Mildmay Road, London N1 4NG

Information

Venue: St John's College, Cambridge.

Fees

2 days full residential

This include 2 day conference, all meals including 3 course dinner and ensuite accommodation within St John's College on night of Wednesday 4 April.

Self funded:

(£100 deposit and £150 paid later) **£250**

Organisationally funded: £350

Optional extra night bed and breakfast

(Tuesday 3rd) **£70**

2 days non-residential

Self Funded: £150

Organisationally funded £300

1 day non-residential

Self Funded: £100

Organisationally funded: £150

Booking Conditions

Deposits are non-refundable; balance to be paid by 31 March. If you have paid in full and need to cancel, 50% of your fee will be refunded if we receive your cancellation in writing by 1 March 2007. After then refunds cannot be given. You may give your ticket to another person, but please give us 48 hours notice if you do so.

Invoicing

If you need an invoice to be sent to your funding body, please supply a covering letter giving full details OR a purchase order number supplied to you by your finance department for the transaction. A £20 admin fee is applied to invoiced places.

CPD

11.5 hours – certificates will be provided at the event

Director of Confer: Jane Ryan

Academic Consultant: Brett Kahr

Project consultant: Elizabeth Wilde McCormick

Confer

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01728 689090

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Booking enquiries: sonia@confer.uk.com

Copies of the flyer from www.confer.uk.com

For our environmental policy, please email:
info@confer.uk.com