

► TOWARDS A NEW RENAISSANCE

The Newsletter of the Scientific and Medical Network

► EDITORIAL

Into the Dark Wood – and Out Again

BY DAVID LORIMER



This year marks the 700th anniversary of the death of Dante, in celebration of which a new translation of his *Purgatorio* will appear in September. The principle of Purgatory is purgation or purification representing a change of state, sometimes also associated with the Christian idea of the dark night of the soul in St John of the Cross. Symbolically, this is a descent into darkness corresponding to that of Christ in the three days between his death and resurrection.

In modern psychospiritual terms, it is the deconstruction of egoic structures and the revelation of the more universal Self in a process of liberation. While for Jung, this is the journey from self to Self or for Thomas Troward what he called Self-recognition when we come to the realisation and there is only one centre of consciousness: that what can say 'I Am' in you is identical to the I Am in me; we are microcosms of One

Universal Mind or the one Oversoul, as Emerson put it in his corresponding essay.

Another frame is that of initiation, as explained by Mircea Eliade: 'Through initiation, man becomes what he is and what he should be – a being open to the life of the spirit, hence one who participates in the culture into which he was born.'

Initiation is a change of being,

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Fresco detail of
Dante Alighieri
holding *The
Divine Comedy*

This issue's theme:
**Initiation, Dreams and the
Underworld**

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depth and silence, p.2

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► FEATURED BLOG



Matthew Fox: Darkness, Depth and Silence

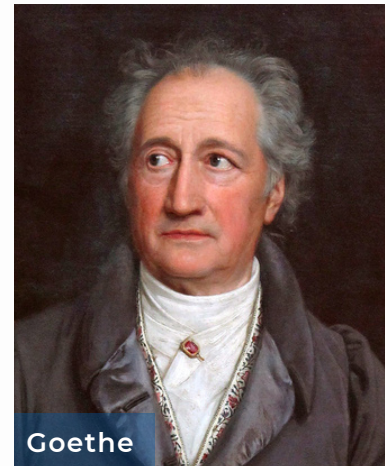
In this recent post from his ongoing daily meditations, theologian Matthew Fox is reflecting on darkness as a metaphor for what mystics of almost all traditions call the Ground of Being: the dark womb of creation out of which all manifestation, including light itself, arises. The recognition of the value of darkness is important, he says, not only spiritually but also psychologically.

'We need to practice the dark and not let the modern era of "enlightenment" have the only word. If we ignore the dark, it may return as shadow to bite us. Carl Jung and other psychologists might call this darkness the "unconscious." And science informing us that 97% of matter in the universe is "dark matter" or "dark energy" and that "black holes" play significant roles in the cosmos also suggest that we sit up and take notice about darkness.' Read the full post [here](#).

Continued from page 1

a gateway to fuller participation in the sacred, to a consecrated existence. It is ritual death followed by resurrection or new birth, the end of one mode of being characterised by ignorance and irresponsibility and entry into a more authentic human existence. Any genuine human life, he writes, implies profound crisis, ordeals, suffering, loss and reconquest of self, "death and resurrection."

My mentor and friend Sir George Trevleyan used to quote the famous poetic lines of Goethe in this respect: 'if you do not grasp this - die and become - then you are merely a




Goethe

dull guest on this dark earth.' Indeed, the whole cycle of nature is one of death and rebirth, unfolding and refolding (Walter Russell), breathing out and in, expansion and contraction, ascent and descent, growth in spring and decay in autumn.

This corresponds to periods of expansion and contraction, joy and sorrow, arrival and departure, love and loss in our own lives - and hopefully to the distillation of precious life

*"The whole cycle of nature is
one of death and rebirth,
unfolding and refolding"*

wisdom from these experiences. In dark times we can always call to mind the famous lines of Shelley: 'if winter comes, can spring be far behind?' 



► VIDEOS OF NOTE

Betty Kovacs: **Spiritual Renaissance**

In this interview about her life and thought, SMN Member Betty Kovacs, PhD, speaking with Anthony Chene, elaborates on the thesis of her recent book *Merchants of Light* (reviewed in *Paradigm Explorer* 131). She explains how myths, shamanic traditions and ancient wisdom held a blueprint for our evolution and our connection to the divine, which modern societies have lost. She shows how these attempts by prophets and mystics to reconnect with our cosmic consciousness through gnosis were classed as heresies in the West and have been repressed by priestly ecclesiastical authorities. However, she says we are now in a time where a bridge between science and spirituality can help us reconnect to who we are through the wisdom of the heart. In this way, we can co-create a more humane future that integrates heart and head, feminine and masculine, intuition and reason, love and wisdom. Watch the clip [here](#).



Jonathan Young: **The Way of The Soul**



Jonathan Young is a psychologist and founding curator of the Joseph Campbell Archive and Library and often draws on myth, folklore and modern stories to explore philosophical and spiritual ideas within a Jungian context. In this June webinar for the Philosophical Society (on their YouTube channel) he uses

his own life story and examples of religious art to illustrate and explore his theme of depth psychology as spiritual formation. In the introduction to the talk, he defines depth psychology as 'those theories that include the notion of the unconscious' and speaks of spiritual formation as 'the process and practice by which we advance toward experiences beyond ordinary knowing'. He highlights the importance of what Jung calls ego relativisation, saying, 'we must, if we are to reach more levels of ourselves, get out of our own way.' Watch the presentation [here](#).

► FEATURED BLOG



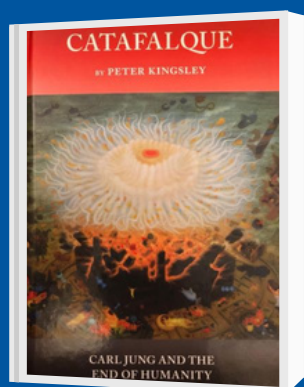
Katharine Esty: **Finding Purpose In Your Life**

Mary Catherine Bateson introduced the term 'the age of active wisdom' to denote a life stage of contribution after retiring from full-time work. And here Katharine Esty asks, in a post on her website, '*What is essential for a good life now?*'

She explains this question by saying that extended life expectancy means 'we start asking different questions that need new answers' and goes on, writing, '*the Big Questions become: "what is the purpose of all these added years?", "what is essential for a good life now?" and we may even find ourselves wondering from time to time, "just why should I survive?"*'

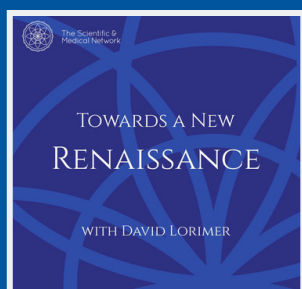
Katherine quotes Immanuel Kant as saying that to be happy it is essential to have something to do, someone to love and something to look forward to – essential wisdom for any age, surely! Read the full post [here](#).

► THE BOOKCAST



A Gnostic Revival

This episode features reviews of two books about the marginalisation - and return - of gnosis. The first is a masterpiece by classical scholar Peter Kingsley called *Catafalque* (subtitled *Carl Jung and the End of Humanity*) about the inner decay of Western culture that has lost touch with its primordial roots. The second, *The Gnostic New Age*, by Rice University scholar Prof April DeConick, describes how a countercultural spirituality and way of knowing has acted as a transgressive but creative impulse for spiritual renewal. Listen to the episode [here](#).



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

► ARTICLES OF NOTE

Amalia Carli: *Dreams as journeys to depths within us*



Amalia Carli is a Network member based in Norway, where she graduated as a psychologist in 1986. This is her article based on a recent talk she gave at one of the SMN Member events.

'In the following article I want to share some notes on a short presentation I did at Paul Kieniewicz's SMN Virtual

Wine Bar in June where I discussed some thoughts about dreams, particularly with views from Carl Gustav Jung, James Hillman as well as from work by Dr Art Funkhouser who conducts seminars on dreamwork at the Carl G. Jung Institute in Zurich where I am a student. I received some interesting comments and would like to express my thanks for the attention and participation at Paul's SMN Wine Bar.'

Dreams as carriers of otherworldly wisdom

For thousands of years, dreams have fascinated people from all times and cultures. Dreams were considered messengers from outer sources, mainly gods- and later within monotheistic religions as communications from the almighty God. Within the Torah, the Hebrew Bible that became the Old Testament for Christians, there are many stories about prophetic dreams... [Read the full article on our website here.](#)

Rudolf Steiner:

The Elemental Spirits of Birth and Death

This is a hugely important lecture on the potentially destructive alliance of technology with evil intent. It comes from a series Fall of the Spirits of Darkness and highlights how elemental forces can influence our thinking even while we deny their existence. It also explains the cyclical nature of human evolution where destruction has to precede rebirth – uninterrupted linear progress does not seem to be the natural order of the universe. [Read the full article here.](#) And there is corresponding audio also available, listen [here](#).

Quote

He who learns but does not think,
is lost! He who thinks but does not
learn is in great danger.
- Confucius, Chinese philosopher



► UPCOMING EVENTS ONLINE

Mystics and Scientists and more...

• Saturday, 31 July, Sunday 1 August.

Mystics and Scientists: Reconnecting with Nature

• Wednesday, 4 August, 7.30-9.30pm.

Dr Kylie Harris: Treating the Climate Emergency as a Spiritual Emergency

• Saturdays, 7, 14, 21, 28 August, 4.00-5.30pm.

Prof Ravi Ravindra: Science and the Sacred

This four-week course by Prof Ravindra is a systematic and profound journey into the nature of reality and a unique opportunity to deepen your spiritual insights.

More details at www.scientificandmedical.net/webinars

Recent webinars - recordings now available!

These are all now available to view for [Network members](#).

- **Susan Schneider: Artificial You**
- **Sarah Myhill: The Energy Equation**
- **Susan Jamieson: Transforming Consciousness for Healing**
- **Michael Jawer: An Emotional Universe?**

Free access to our webinar library is just one of our member benefits. To learn more click [here](#).

► FEATURED PODCAST

Jane Garvey

Life Changing

BY CHARLOTTE LORIMER

In the final episode of this new series, Life Changing, former Women's Hour presenter Jane Garvey interviews Tony Kofi, a man who almost died after falling off a roof. During the fall, he saw images of what his life could be. Afterwards, he thought: "You didn't die and I think life is trying to tell you something. I'd never done music in my life and yet here's me contemplating using my compensation money to go and buy an instrument." Tony became a highly-acclaimed saxophonist. Listen [here](#).



► SMN VIDEO CLIPS



The SMN Webinar Library Meet The Board - July

Most months the SMN has a special free event called 'Meet The Board', hosted by SMN President Bernard Carr, intended to introduce some of the SMN team to you and also present on particular features of the Network. In July the focus was on our redesigned video library - a great membership benefit! Watch the recording [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](#).
scientificandmedical.net**

► WE'D LOVE TO
HEAR FROM YOU...



We are excited to bring you *Towards a New Renaissance* on a regular basis and the response has been brilliant. We would also love to get your feedback and ideas on how we can make the newsletter even better and more relevant to you. Send us comments/suggestions on our contact form [HERE](#)

If you have been enjoying this monthly digest, would you also 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 £2–£5 a month – can allow us to plan ahead with new ways to bring you great content.

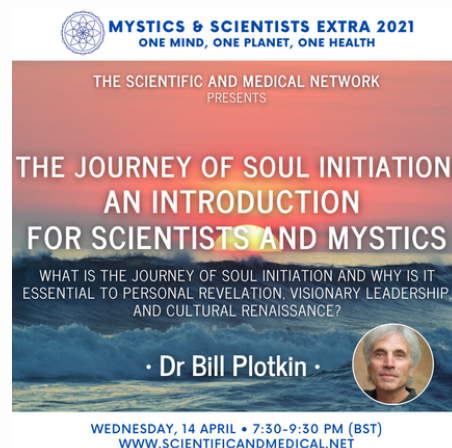
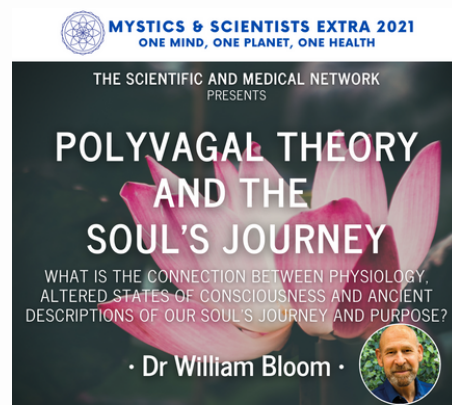
Click here to choose a donation level via PayPal - and thank you!

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

The last eighteen months of lockdown have produced a sharp increase in high-quality online presentations and events 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. A few of our recent ones are below:



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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