

“Varieties of Religious Experience”

This is another name for our study group, after the book of that name by William James, who, with F.D.H. Myers, was the inspiration for the milestone book *Irreducible Mind*, our reference book

The hope is that the group may help us a little in our spiritual development, and do this by looking at the spiritual dimension of things through the lens of general human experience with the eyes of heuristic science.

In a faith community we focus on the living relationships to each other, to the world, and to transcendent/immanent Spirit. Here we step back and ponder about the nature of the Reality in which we have these relationships.

Because we live in a thoroughly materialistic Western world, we need to be clear why the materialistic assumption about mind/consciousness/spirit is false, namely that mind/consciousness/Spirit is *nothing but electrochemical processes in the brain*. And *Irreducible Mind* is basically a falsification of that materialist assumption. If we are not clear about this falsification we will be eternally in conflict as to whether or not we are truly spiritual beings.

Perhaps the time may come when the group would care to promote the five-session Power Point presentation summarising *Irreducible Mind* to others.

The e-journal *The Ground of Faith* looks at Reality through the same eyes as this group. Its url is www.thegroundoffaith.net/ and I can upload any material that members of the group would like to share with each other into a special section at the end of the *current* issue. Files for uploading should be emailed to editor@thegroundoffaith.net

We might follow this pattern when we meet:

A short period of meditation

A presentation from one of us:

As Spirit is infinitely varied in its manifestation, there is no limit to the kinds of presentation, as long as it is truly meaningful to the presenter.

To suggest one possible presentation: “*Spirit seen through art works*” : A number of photos of art works could be uploaded into the current issue of The Ground of Faith, together with background material. Members could study the material there on the internet.. Then the presenter could talk about the uploaded material, and there could be discussion.

Various presentations suggest themselves from *Irreducible Mind*

From J B Watson to the cognitive revolution John Searle’s critique of computational theories of the mind Psi phenomena Memory Psychological automatism and secondary centers of consciousness : The unity of conscious experience Genius level creativity Mystical experience Afterlife and so on.

But given the nature of Spirit, the number of topic is infinite.

General discussion as the group feels fit Supper

We shall be meeting at St Michael’s Church Oxford Terrace in their meeting room on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm

THE POINT OF VIEW

Dualism is not a fashionable way of interpreting reality these days. Science and philosophies depict reality as one system. Spiritually minded people like to talk of the One, and Christians talk about our being “one in the Lord”. In envisaging an afterlife some deny survival of the individual personality, but speak of being absorbed into the one. Memory belongs to the whole, they say, there is a kind of supertelepathy, where apparent manifestations of survival of death of the individual are in actual fact the manifestations of knowledge and memory belonging to the whole.

Can this be?

Such thinking takes no account of the Point of View. All memories are from the point of view of individuals who see things from their own point of view. Their point of view will include the individual past histories, their attitudes and feelings about things, the time and place of the matter remembered, what the individual was attending to at the time, their state of mind, thoughts and feelings about the event or information being attended to, and the consequences for their lives. All memories have a personal interpretation. They are not at all like what is captured on camera or microphone. Say, for example, we sit in the garden. Our eyes can scan the whole scene, or they can perhaps focus on the grass, and note that it needs cutting, that there are brown patches suggesting damage from chewing grubs, and one thinks about possible ways of eradicating them. It is surprising to find how much we can think about, even with grass. But there are the flowers, the soil, the climate, the sky, the wind, the washing on the line. Before we know it, the thoughts that might arise out of the contemplation of a garden might fill half an encyclopedia. No camera, no microphone can compete.

Memories then must arise from myriad possible points of view, where this or that is selected from infinite possible matters by acts of attention, depending on our personal history, our emotions, our interests, and the urgencies of the moment.

What memory can there be that does not involve a point of view? So if memory is to persist beyond the grave, then we cannot imagine this memory to be part of a kind of cosmic soup, but rather it must be the memory of the point of view of a given entity. Messages from beyond the grave must be from individuals.

We can extend these ideas to our thinking about spirituality. We must accept that we all see spirituality from a myriad points of view, and these include shared points of view such as those of various Christian traditions, with all their histories, teachings, positive and negative activities. When we think of the numberless people who have been Christian and the multitude of their differences, we realise we have a very complex web of points of view indeed.

Of course there are many non-Christian people in the world, and many who are materialists. An almost infinite number of points of view are to be discovered here also CARRY ON THE DISCUSSION to develop the idea that in our group

we might start from a corporate more conventionally religious set of points of view, and that by engaging in our thinking we are widening it.