

הכנס הישראלי הרביעי לחקר רוחניות עכשווית

The **Fourth** Israeli Conference for the Study of (Contemporary Spiritualities ICSCS)

Workshops Day – 19.03.12

08:30 – 09:30

Registration

09:30 – 12:00

Parallel Workshops – Part A

12:00 – 13:00

Lunch Break

13:00 – 15:30

Parallel Workshops – Part B

15:30 – 16:00

Break

16:00 – 18:00 **Plenary Session, Open to the Public**
(Hecht Auditorium, Main Building)

Chair: **Prof. Nadav Davidivitch** (Ben Gurion University in the Negev)

Disciplinary Struggles: Introducing Spirituality into the Academia

Prof. Jonathan Halevy (Director General, Shaare Zedek Medical Center),

Prof. Ofra Mayselless (University of Haifa), **Dr. Yaki Menschenfreund** (The Open University)

Three Parallel Sessions

	Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Workshop 3
Part A	Alternative Responses to Minority Religions Prof. Eileen Barker (London School of Economics)	Kabbalistic Psychology Prof. Les Lancaster (Liverpool John Moores University)	Knowing When to Get Out of the Way: Research Musings on Transpersonal Therapies Prof. Harris L. Friedman (Florida University)
Part B	Does Humanism Require Spirituality? Prof. Paul Heelas (Erasmus University Rotterdam)	Dr. Menachem Kallus (University of Haifa)	Prof. Douglas MacDonald (University of Detroit Mercy)

Workshops Description:

Workshop 1 (09:30 -12:00)

Alternative Responses to Minority Religions

Prof. Eileen Barker (London School of Economics)

Abstract:

This workshop will involve a series of short introductory talks, each followed by discussion amongst participants about some of the reasons why academics not only can but possibly should contribute knowledge that can inform policy makers in their reactions to minority religions in a pluralistic democracy.

Questions to be raised will include (a) the need for scholarly information, when participants will be asked to describe areas of ignorance and/or misinformation currently evident in their respective countries; (b) methodological alternatives available to scholars, giving concrete examples of the different resources employed by various actors in the so-called 'cult scene' (including a discussion on the use of appropriate terms, selectivity of data and informants, the comparative method and various statistical techniques); (c) awareness of the limits of social science and the potential dangers of 'stepping outside the ivory tower' (including the limitations imposed by 'methodological agnosticism'); (d) consideration of the advantages and potential problems involved in encouraging direct contact with the minority religions themselves; (e) practical suggestions about how to proceed (including the extension of an international network of those with specialist knowledge, setting up reliable information centers, and various other methods of challenging ignorance and misinformation).

Eileen Barker, PhD, PhD h.c., OBE, FBA, is Professor Emeritus of Sociology with Special Reference to the Study of Religion at the London School of Economics, University of London. Her main research interest is 'cults', 'sects' and new religious movements, and the social reactions to which they give rise; but since 1989 she has also been investigating changes in the religious situation in post-communist countries.

She has around 300 publications (translated into 27 different languages), which include the award-winning *The Making of a Moonie: Brainwashing or Choice?* and *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction*.

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In the late 1980s, with the support of the British Government and mainstream Churches, she founded INFORM, an educational charity based at the LSE which provides information about minority religions that is as accurate, objective and up-to-date as possible. In 2000, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II appointed her as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the New Year's Honours list for 'services to INFORM'.

She was elected to Fellowship of the British Academy (FBA) in 1998, and in 2000, she received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Copenhagen and was the recipient of the American Academy of Religion's Martin E. Marty Award for the Public Understanding of Religion. She was the first non-American to be elected President of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion; she is Honorary Life President of ISORECEA (International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association); an Honorary Research Fellow of Institute of Philosophy, Academy of Science, Kiev; and in 2011 she was elected as an Honorary Fellow of the London School of Economics.

She is a frequent advisor to governments, other official bodies and law-enforcement agencies throughout the world, has made numerous appearances on television and radio, and has been invited to give guest lectures in over 50 countries.

Workshop 1 (13:00 – 15:30)

Does Humanism Require Spirituality?

Prof. Paul Heelas (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Abstract:

Attributing a foundational role to naturalism or materialism, and relying as much as possible on the exercise of reason, secular humanists take great pride in the form of ethicality which they so often hold dear. Having rejected supernatural or metaphysical categories, religious edicts and god-given rights have been replaced by the ethic of humanity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations almost sixty years ago, is the single most influential rendering of the ethic. The bedrock is human nature or life; accordingly, the language is secular.

Despite church leaders and other public figures claiming that the rejection of the moral frameworks of religion results in moral chaos, secular renderings of the ethic of humanity have become dominant in western countries. On first sight, the secular ethic appears to work remarkably well. Empirically based on what humans have in common, their nature, human-centred values and sense of purpose in life certainly appear to suffice for the ‘good life’. That most post-Christian of western countries, Sweden, does not support the scare mongers. It is one of the most peaceful of nations.

However, it would be rash in the extreme to conclude that the ethic of humanity cannot benefit from spirituality. The argument of the secular humanist, that spirituality is harmful or a hindrance, can be reversed. In many circumstances, spirituality— specifically what is commonly known in the west as ‘New Age’ - can play an important role in buttressing or reinforcing the humanistic worldview. Evidence from Pakistan, for example, graphically shows what spirituality can contribute to the ethicality of humanism. Whilst those of an atheistic, humanistic persuasion will probably not be persuaded to re-evaluate their own, personal rejection of spirituality, the evidence suggests that it might be useful to reflect on the value, the benefits of spiritual humanism. It might be useful to move beyond the confines of exclusivistic secular humanism to reflect on how spiritual humanism can serve as a potent ‘source of significance’, motivation and appeal: more potent, that is, than the relatively uninspiring operation of the ethic of humanity in secular, legalistic mode. If secular humanists want to ensure that what works relatively well can work better, spirituality has to be taken seriously.

The very liberality of humanism, understood as a concern for human wellbeing in all its aspects, means that spirituality has to be taken into account when the ‘good life’ is understood accordingly. The values which underpin or translate into ‘rights’ are then taken to be rooted in a substantial form of human nature: the universal of the spiritual birthright. The litmus test of sociocultural phenomena is here in place, the birthright distinguishing between what works for the good or the bad of what is taken to lie within. And when meaningful reality proclaims that human rights are due to humans by virtue of their ‘natural’ endowment, value lies with the universal: not the sociocultural; not that which differs from place to place, setting the stage for contestation.

Paul Heelas is a Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Lancaster University and at Erasmus University Rotterdam. His *Spiritualities of Life. New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism*, which pays greater attention to some of the themes addressed here, has recently been published by Blackwell.

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Workshop 2 (09:30 – 15:30)

Kabbalistic Psychology

Prof. Les Lancaster (Liverpool John Moores University)

Dr. Menachem Kallus (University of Haifa)

Abstract:

This exploratory workshop is distinctive in bringing together two eminent scholars with complementary interests in the Kabbalah. Professor Lancaster has been working on the psychological dimensions of Kabbalah, not only in terms of the psychological insights that are intrinsic to kabbalistic material but also in relation to recent advances in our understanding of consciousness and the mind through cognitive neuroscience, transpersonal, and depth psychology. Rabbi Dr. Kallus is a noted researcher in the history of Kabbalistic speculation and practice. The workshop will be dialogic and exploratory in two senses. Firstly, the workshop will distil the ongoing dialogue between Kallus and Lancaster as they formulate the ‘kabbalistic psychology’ of the title. And, secondly, participants will be encouraged to dialogue with the presenters in relation to their respective understandings of the ways in which traditional forms of kabbalistic speculation and practice find expression in ‘modern’ terms. Both these authors believe that it is live contemporary interaction that gives profound meaning to spiritual enterprises, and intend the workshop as an opportunity to move forward such interaction.

The presenters will introduce participants to psycho-spiritual practices that integrate techniques promulgated in diverse kabbalistic schools with recent thinking in transpersonal psychology, and will convey their theoretical formulations of contemporary ‘mind science’ as understood through kabbalistic frameworks. Given features of the historical development in Kabbalah—the effect of encountering diverse systems of thought, and the progressive emphasis placed on psychological aspects of the kabbalistic worldview—this workshop is presented as a contemporary expression of that creative spirit which has always coursed through the living stream of esoteric Judaism.

The opening **introductory** session (30 minutes) will contextualise the workshop in relation to both psychological approaches to mysticism and the academic study of Kabbalah. We will examine what may be best understood as a form of *esoteric psychology* through which kabbalists grasped the inner, generally unconscious, determinants of thought, and practised techniques which effectively expanded the sphere of conscious control over thought processes. Whilst these practices were primarily oriented towards religious and theurgic goals, our immediate focus will be their more psychological effects.

In the main morning session, we will focus on the **Hebrew letter mysticism** (2 hours) which underpins many kabbalistic practices. In historical terms, the Hebrew letters were reformulated (probably during the Babylonian exile) evidently with the intention of investing them with core mystical and esoteric value. Psychologically, the letters may be said to convey archetypal meaning. Our objective in this session will be to unpack such meaning, and to explore practices which open deeper realms of mind to the symbolic value of the letters. Techniques to be taught include visualisation, movement and breath-work.

The afternoon session will take us into the **hermeneutic world of the Kabbalah** (2 hours). The kabbalists developed further the rabbinic view of Torah—with its emphasis on the *midrashic* imagination—through their emphasis on a universal pattern underlying all things, the Tree of *Sefirot*. The core of mystical praxis in Judaism is the ‘*hermeneutic encounter*,’ whereby mystical experience and knowledge arise through the distinctive process of interpreting the text of scripture. Again, it is the psychological axis that our workshop seeks to explore; we suggest that the dance of ‘revealing-and-concealing,’ which characterises the hermeneutic encounter, is at one and the same time both theocentric—enabling the mystic to see the divine pattern in Torah, world and soul—and psychological—promoting the unfolding into consciousness of unconscious content and bringing a higher integration of being. Both morning and afternoon sessions will incorporate experiential work, theoretical content and open discussion. A **concluding session** (30 minutes) will explore more generally the value of our approach to Kabbalistic Psychology, and the impact of kabbalistic ideas for the development of consciousness studies and transpersonal psychology.

Les Lancaster is Professor of Transpersonal Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University, UK, Honorary Research Fellow in the Centre for Jewish Studies at Manchester University, and Adjunct Research Faculty at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and the California Institute of Integral Studies. He is currently Chair of the Transpersonal Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society, and President of the International Transpersonal Association. At LJMU he co-founded

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the Consciousness and Transpersonal Psychology Research Unit, through which postgraduate programmes in these areas ran for some 15 years. He currently directs a new Masters Programme in Consciousness and Transpersonal Studies. In addition to various journal articles, Les' published works include *Mind Brain and Human Potential*, winner of a Science and Medical Network Best Book Award, *The Essence of Kabbalah*, and *Approaches to Consciousness: the Marriage of Science and Mysticism*, about which Chief Rabbi, Professor Jonathan Sacks commented: "With formidable erudition and the widest of perspectives, Brian Lancaster has written a challenging and potentially ground-breaking book on the relationship between scientific and mystical ideas of human consciousness. A humane scholar in the great tradition of William James, his work deserves to be read and discussed widely".

Les' career has included both research in cognitive neuroscience and scholarship within the study of religious mysticism, the latter focusing extensively on the Kabbalah and, more especially, its psychological aspects. These twin spheres of interest have come together in books and articles exploring the interface between spirituality, mysticism, consciousness, and the brain. In addition to research and scholarship, Les teaches spiritual practices and leads international workshops on *Kabbalistic Psychology*.

Menachem Kallus is currently the principal researcher of a three-year Israel Science Foundation sponsored project to, for the first time, compose a history of graphical representation of Kabbalistic ideas, 1200-1900, together with Dr. Yossi Chajes of Haifa University. Kallus has recently published "Pillar of Prayer" [Fons Vitae Press, 2011] a bi-lingual edition of more than three hundred teachings with commentary, on contemplative prayer from the circle of R Israel Baal Shem Tov. He received his Ph.D. from the Hebrew University in 2004 for a dissertation on the theurgy of prayer in Lurianic Kabbalah. He was ordained Rabbi by R Zalman Schachter Shalomi in 1998, and has been a close friend and student of the late Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. He has studied and practiced various forms of Buddhist meditation with both Theravada and Tibetan teachers over the past three decades. Kallus was born into an Orthodox Jewish family of Holocaust survivors and currently practices Judaism in a semi-traditional-post-modern way, in Jerusalem Israel. He is married and has one son.

Workshop 3 (9:30 – 15:30)

Knowing When to Get Out of the Way: Research Musings on Transpersonal Therapies

Prof. Harris L. Friedman (Florida University)

Prof. Douglas MacDonald (University of Detroit Mercy)

Abstract:

Since its inception as a unique subdiscipline within psychology in the late 1960s, transpersonal psychology has been involved in the development of theories and technologies, often derived from spiritual, mystical, and religious systems, to be applied to the amelioration of human functioning, both in terms of treating psychopathology and in terms of facilitating optimal human well-being. There are now a fairly large number of transpersonal therapeutic systems available and practiced throughout the world, including attentional (e.g., neurofeedback), biochemical (e.g., psychedelic), depth psychological (e.g., psychosynthesis), existential (e.g., logotherapy), and somatic (e.g., holotropic breathwork) approaches, to name just a few. This workshop will provide an overview of extant transpersonal therapies, and discuss the general state of their research status, especially in terms of their effectiveness. It will also explore some of their core commonalities. These include focusing on the following: (a) immediate experience; (b) quality of self-representation within experience; (c) identification of elements of experience that permit one to reframe and experience self in a more complex, complete, integrated, expanded, or sacred way; and (d) that they do not have exclusive focus on treatment of dysfunction, but can be growth oriented. Thereafter, it will explore some of their fundamental underpinnings, both philosophical and methodological. Participants will also have the opportunity to engage in exercises to experientially, as well as cognitively, better understand how to engage in transpersonal therapy, either as a provider or recipient. The workshop will conclude with a discussion of various ways how therapy and assessment may be integrated.

Harris Friedman, PhD, is a clinical and consulting psychologist, as well as supervises dissertations at a number of universities. He recently retired as Research Professor of Psychology at University of Florida and Professor Emeritus at Saybrook University. He has over 100 professional publications, mainly in the area of socio-cultural and transpersonal psychology, as well as on methodology. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, and serves as Senior Editor of the *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* and Associate Editor of *The Humanistic Psychologist*.

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He recently was President of the International Transpersonal Association, and Chairs the Transpersonal Interest Group of the American Psychological Association (as part of the Society for Humanistic Psychology). His most recent books, both co-edited with Stanley Krippner in 2010 and published by Praeger, are *Mysterious Minds* and *Debating Psychic Experiences*. He is currently co-editing with others *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of Transpersonal Psychology*, *The Praeger Series on Social Justice and Psychology* (2 volumes), and *Advances in Parapsychological Research, Volume 9*.

Douglas A. MacDonald, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Detroit Mercy in the United States, and a practicing psychologist in Canada. He has been actively involved in research in the areas of spirituality and transpersonal psychology for over 20 years and is a recognized expert in the area of the assessment and measurement of spiritual and transpersonal constructs. He is Research Editor for both the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* and the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* and Editor Emeritus for the *International Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*. He is also one of the founding members of the International Board for the International Transpersonal Association.