

Free Thought:

A Graduate/Postgraduate Conference of Philosophical and Religious Enquiry

Friday 19th March (pm) and Saturday 20th March 2021



Contents:	p.3	Introduction
	p.4	Conference Timetable
	p.6	Speakers and Abstracts

Introduction

Welcome to Free Thought, an online graduate and postgraduate conference in philosophy and religious studies held by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lampeter Campus. This interdisciplinary event aims to provide a platform for students to showcase their work and present research to contemporaries in a relaxed environment.

The search for purpose is a human truism, and the collaboration between philosophy and religion dates back to the dawn of reason and wonder, as scholars sought to uncover meaning in a world where none seemed apparent. Free Thought sits squarely in that intersection, allowing students of both disciplines to learn from their contemporaries and continue this tradition.

The organisers are:

Dr Rebekah Humphreys

Professor Bettina Schmidt

Daniel Amatiello (currently studying a MA in Philosophy)

Mara Steenhuisen (currently studying a PhD in Religious Studies)

Conference Timetable

Each 30 minute segment will consist of a 20 minute talk, followed by 10 minutes Q&A. During the final discussion on Saturday, there will be a prize awarded to the best paper. (Times are in GMT).

Friday

	2.45 – 3	Meet and greet
1	3 – 3.30	Tim Salt: Foreknowledge of God: An Introduction
2	3.30 – 4	Florence O'Taylor: Paying attention to women living with addiction: Toward a political theological method in conversation with Simone Weil and William Cavanaugh
	4 – 4.30	Coffee break
3	4.30 – 5	Thomas Froy: He gives religiously
	5 – 5.30	Discussion

Saturday

	9.45 – 10	Meet and greet
4	10 – 10.30	Julio César Cárdenas Arenas: Ibn Taymīyah's Criticism to Philosophy (falsafah) and to Jewish and Christian Religions in his "Rebuttal of Greek Logicians"
5	10.30 – 11	Alireza Kazemi: (Evolution of human cognitions, science, philosophy, religion) towards monotheistic cognition
	11 – 11.30	Coffee break
6	11.30 – 12	Talha Bhamji: Revisiting the Memory of Hijrah
7	12 – 12.30	Nithin Varghese: Sacred Violence: On Religion and Violence in Karnad's Plays
8	12.30 – 1	Hasan Ghaderi: Transmigration in the Upanishad
	1 – 2	Lunch break
9	2 – 2.30	Ayşe Bilge Yilmaz: An Enquiry into the Roles of Effort

**and Grace, and Their Cosmological Implications, amongst
Contemporary Gurdjieffians**

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|----|----------|---|
| 10 | 2.30 – 3 | Rebecca Louise Burn: Crossing the Boundary: The
Depiction of Transgression, Loss, and Grief in Early
Medieval Welsh and Irish poetry |
| | 3 – 3.30 | Coffee break |
| 11 | 3.30 – 4 | Emmeke Vierhout: ‘What does the word “I” refer to?’ |
| 12 | 4 – 4.30 | Lisa Lynn Whitsett: Dualism and Beyond: Philosophy and
the Future of the Mind |
| | 4.30 – 5 | Discussion |

Speakers and Abstracts

1. Tim Salt: Foreknowledge of God: An Introduction

Traditionally, God is considered to have four primary characteristics: Omnipotence (all-powerful), Omnipresence (everywhere at once), Omnibenevolence (all-loving) and Omniscience (all-knowing). God's foreknowledge is a subset of God's Omniscience and refers to his knowledge of the future. Many authors have discussed this idea and the philosophical soundness of the concept. They include St. Augustine, John Calvin, David Hunt, Luis de Molina and Gregory Boyd. From these writings, four positions have emerged: the Augustinian-Calvinist position, Simple-Foreknowledge, Molinism (Middle-knowledge) and Open Theism.

Firstly, the Augustinian-Calvinist position holds that God has total knowledge of the future. According to this view, there is nothing which God does not know. This means that God knows every aspect of what will occur before it occurs. This theory postulates that God preordained the future before the creation of the cosmos. Augustinian-Calvinists propose Biblical texts to support their philosophical position. These include Acts 2:12, Jeremiah 18 and Isaiah 46:10.

Secondly, Simple-Foreknowledge. This view argues that God simply knows the future. This means that God knows what free agents shall do. Although Augustinian-Calvinism and Simple-Foreknowledge both put forward the belief that God does know the future, Simple-Foreknowledge does not think that God has preordained the future from the creation of the universe. It is also different from Molinism because it does not rely upon separating God's knowledge into three separate parts. Biblical texts which support Simple-Foreknowledge include Matthew 26 and Psalms 139:4.

Third, Molinism. This option separates God's knowledge into three sections: Free-Knowledge, Middle-Knowledge and Natural-Knowledge. Free-Knowledge describes God's desires. It defines what will exist or what actually exists. Natural-Knowledge describes knowledge that is inherently correct (for example $2+2=4$) and is separate and independent from God. Middle-Knowledge falls inbetween these two and refers to God's knowledge of counterfactuals. Like the Augustinian-Calvinist and Simple-foreknowledge positions, Molinism also consults Biblical texts such as Luke 22:54-62.

Finally, Open Theism. Unlike other philosophical positions, this does not think that God knows the future. It still holds that God has Omniscience (God knows all possible things), but the future is not possible to know. The knowledge of the future is considered illogical and impossible. Examples of this could be $2+2=5$ or a triangle having four sides. Unlike the other philosophical positions, Open Theism splits into four concepts: Voluntary Nescience, Involuntary Nescience, Bivalent Omniscience and Non-Bivalent Omniscience. All these four positions hold that the future is unknowable, even to God, but find different philosophical methods to describe how this can be the case. Open Theism proposes Biblical texts like Gen 6:6-7, 1 Sam 15:11-35 and Matthew 19:8.

In my presentation, I want to introduce these philosophical concepts; to evaluate and comment on their successes, failures and religious implications. These implications are essential for those who believe God does have Omniscience as they impact the fundamental beliefs held by Christians. I wish to show how these beliefs are affected and can possibly be contradicted by the beliefs of the faithful.

Hello, my name is Tim Salt and I'm currently studying an MRs in Philosophy at UWTSD via distance learning from Cornwall, England. Before embarking upon this postgraduate research, I studied Theology, Religion and Philosophy at undergraduate level. My dissertation title was, 'How Do the Cosmological Arguments Prove the Existence of the Monotheistic God of the Abrahamic Religions?' I received a first-class degree from UWTSD and was awarded the Helen McCormack-Turner Scholarship. It should be noted before I present that I am not a Christian. I am agnostic but am nevertheless very interested in Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology.

2. Florence O'Taylor: Paying attention to women living with addiction: Toward a political theological method in conversation with Simone Weil and William Cavanaugh

This paper is an exploration of Simone Weil and William Cavanaugh as potential resources for constructing a political theological framework capable of paying attention to women living with substance addiction. Weil, who described herself neither as a politician theologian, nor a theologian at all, for that matter, is a thinker that fits and transgresses both categories in a way that enriches the field. There are three ideas in Weil's writing that I will be drawing on primarily – paying attention to affliction, the history of force and the need for roots – to establish a basis for imagining a future dialogue with women living with substance addiction. I shall bring these aspects of her thought into dialogue with two areas of Cavanaugh's wide-ranging political theology: his critique of liberalism and his use of the Augustinian two cities to construct an alternative socio-political imagination. In reading Cavanaugh and Weil together, it becomes possible to negotiate a space between a realism that lacks the imagination to offer an alternative to the current socio-political system, and a communitarian utopia that is in danger of idolatry and naivety. Instead, we might pursue a third way, not of compromise, but of tension, capable of attending to reality, recognising the systems of injustice present, and constructing a response that resists them. While addiction is often framed in individualised, pathological terms, we will consider it as a socio-political reality that is a specific facet of social relatedness. It is crucial that we recognise women living with substance addiction are often located 'outliers' and 'blameworthy' in both church and society, and consider what mythic structures undergird such a location, challenging

them with more accurate narratives. Understanding addiction as socially located, this paper shall argue we first pay attention to the socio-political reality of women living with addictions, in order to rupture the imagination that marginalises them, before constructing an alternative socio-political imagination in pursuit of love and justice. Weil – once deemed the ‘patron saint of all outsiders’ – might help us to do just this amongst WLWA, recognising their addiction as affliction, the societal injustices present and the potential means by which we might listen to their voices. Considering their words to hold truth, we might create spaces that rupture the reign of force through theological reflection.

Florence O'Taylor is a second year PhD student at Durham University researching women's experience of substance dependence through the lens of political theology. Her approach is empirically grounded, centring the voices of women living with addiction. She engages particularly with the theology of Simone Weil and William Cavanaugh, as thinkers who both illuminate the socio-political reality while being attentive to suffering and affliction, resisting the pastoral focus present in much of the theological reflection on addiction.

3. Thomas Froy: He gives religiously

To date, Martin Buber's place in the work of Jacques Derrida's conception of dwelling has been recognised in the literature only 'by transitivity of implication' through the latter's relationship with Emmanuel Levinas, and therefore, also with Martin Heidegger. More recently, scholars have begun to rethink Buber's place in twentieth century philosophy (Breslauer 2017, Löwy 2017, Brody 2019): this may yet lead to the recognition of a 'Buber-Derrida' dialogue.

In anticipation of this possible 'dialogue-to-come', this presentation seeks to focus specifically on Buber and Derrida's representations of the figure of Abraham within their discourses on dwelling. While Derrida's main texts on dwelling ('Of Hospitality' and 'Hostipitality') are explicitly and deeply directed to the Levinasian-Heideggerian discourse, they contain short discussions of Abraham as the exemplary figure of hospitality. Abraham's exemplarity consists in the unconditionality of his hospitality: he welcomes whoever passes his threshold, and gives himself to them extremely generously. Abraham hospitality, in a sense, consists in giving everything, even oneself.

Such a conception of hospitality is prefigured, in strikingly similar terms, in Buber's concept of 'sabbatical existence' ('On Zion'): here, Buber describes a mode of dwelling which refuses any aspiration to autochthony, rootedness or nationalism, and instead celebrates its neighbourly relations. This celebration is manifested by the giving of first fruits of the harvests to one's neighbours. Giving, thus, is the first sign of the dwelling.

The centrality and extent of Derrida's commitment to religion has been the subject of much debate in the past decades, following the publication of texts such

as 'Acts of Religion' and 'Spectres of Marx': this debate, however, has primarily focussed a French-originating, existentialist conception of identity, beginning with Sartre, through Levinas, Blanchot and so on. More recently, scholars have begun to think about Derrida's conception of religion by refinding German-Jewish roots, in thinkers such as Rosenzweig and Strauss. It may be interesting, therefore, to note that, when thinking about dwelling, Derrida turns – in step with Buber – to the originary figure of Abraham.

For both Buber and Derrida, Abrahamic hospitality is an unconditional welcome and an infinite giving. Abraham doesn't know who he welcomes, and thus does not know how welcoming he should be: in contemporary jargon, he gives 'religiously'. What, then, does a 'religious' commitment to hospitality entail? What do Buber and Derrida consider to be the lessons we should learn from Abraham's example? How do those lessons speak to us today?

I am a Research Master student in Philosophy at UAntwerpen. I am interested in conceptions of dwelling developed in the 20th century, especially in the work of Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. A key strand of this research is identifying the different ways in which certain stories, hermeneutic techniques and ethical precepts originating in Judaism have been borrowed, repurposed and reproduced in thinking about dwelling today.

4. Julio César Cárdenas Arenas: Ibn Taymīyah's Criticism to Philosophy (falsafah) and to Jewish and Christian Religions in his "Rebuttal of Greek Logicians"

The reactions of medieval Muslim scholars when Greek philosophy and logic were received in Christian-Muslim Arab translations are diverse, the case of the theologian and jurist Ibn Taymīyah (1263-1328) is paradigmatic because in his critique of Aristotelian's philosophy and logic he presents a parallel criticism of Muslim philosophers (al-falāsifah) and philosophy (falsafah), as well as Jews (al-ṭahūd) and Christians (al-naṣāra). Ibn Taymīyah's criticism of philosophy is legal, epistemological, and social, is made throughout his book Rebuttal of Greek Logicians (al-Raḍ 'ala al-manṭiqīn), in which the author presents his Islamic legal opinion on the study and use of philosophy among Muslims, and his epistemological criteria to discern the truth (al-ḥaqq) between the social and religious groups mentioned. For the analysis three topics are translated directly from Ibn Taymīyah's Arabic texts: 1. His criticism of Greek and Muslim philosophy (falsafah). 2. His critique of the philosophical understanding of divine affairs (al-ilāhīāt). 3. The comparisons between Philosophers and religious groups.

In the first topic, Ibn Taymīyah presents a general critique of Philosophy, in the second one his epistemological critique of like Aristotelian and Muslim philosophy and logic received by Jews, Christians, Sabeans, and Muslims as insufficient for the theological understanding of Islamic beliefs and as a denial of them, especially Ibn Sīnā's case; in the second one, he made many comparisons that include an apologetic critique typical of religious controversy on idolaters, Jews, and Christians, assuming in such texts that their errors and theological deviations are less than

those of philosophers but enough to an epistemological, religious, and social rejection of such religious groups and, therefore, to Greek and Muslim philosophy. The paper analyzes, on the one hand, the critical and legal opinion of Ibn Taymīyah on the Muslim philosophers, their methodologies, and their central ontological and cosmological ideas as well as his rebuttal of Jewish and Christian religions immersed in his criticism and, on the other hand, the paper proposes, unlike Ibn Taymīyah, the value of philosophical understanding for theological matters to an intellectual approach and a collaborative dialogue between different beliefs and theologies without giving up one's own or denigrating the others, far away from just apologetical and refutational purposes.

The paper makes two critical conclusions: the first one, Ibn Taymīyah's criticism of logic and philosophy includes an explicit use of logical arguments and philosophical Greek and Arabic concepts; the second one, his methodological criteria to consider philosophy insufficient or false to understand any theology or religion does not imply nor validate his criticism to Judaism or Christianity.

Julio César Cárdenas Arenas is a Ph.D. Candidate in Sciences of Religion (Spain) and a Master Candidate in Islamic Culture (Saudi Arabia). He has graduate from Master in Catholic Theology (Pontifical University), Islamic Theology (Islamic University), Philosophy (Colombia) and Arabic Philology (Egypt); his work focuses on comparative theology, medieval philosophy and semitic philology. Contact: prof.abuismail@gmail.com; Books in: casadesabiduria.com

5. Alireza Kazemi: (Evolution of human cognitions, science, philosophy, religion) towards monotheistic cognition

As man is expected to travel in the evolutionary path, there must certainly be tools and means for this. Man is aware of both himself and the world, and wants to be more aware of himself and the world. His evolution, progress and happiness depend on these two consciousnesses. The acquired knowledge of man, both in the field of self-knowledge and in the worldview (cosmology) is the result of his perceptual mechanism. Science and art (philosophy) and if we give a divine aspect to philosophical cognition, it can be considered as a more complete cognition than philosophical cognition (religious cognition). Human beings can be considered as an evolutionary path, that is, by examining the shortcomings of scientific cognition, philosophical cognition can be achieved, and from its shortcomings, religious cognition can be achieved, and religious cognition can be recognized as its evolution. Also, it has not been left untouched by the limited human mind to be mentioned as a complete cognition, and by examining the shortcomings of religious cognition, we can reach the intact cognition of human beings, that is, monotheistic cognition.

I am Alireza Kazemi. researcher and professor of Islamic philosophy and theology in the seminary of Tehran in the Islamic Republic of Iran. I had various projects in the field of philosophy of the West and the East, and during a new research project I came to the conclusion that the evolution of human cognitions from philosophical rituals leads to the monotheistic knowledge of Islamic philosophy. And Islamic knowledge is the evolution of philosophers' theories. Of course, in addition to

philosophy, it has been much deeper and deeper in other scientific fields than other philosophical rituals.

6. Talha Bhamji: Revisiting the Memory of Hijrah

Hijrah in the Islamic tradition typically refers to migration undertaken by Muhammad and his companions from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E, as well as marking the start of the Islamic calendrical system. So crucial is Hijrah that on numerous occasions the Qur'an and the *Ahadith*, two fundamental sources used in *Sunni* Islamic tradition, reiterate the significance of this event. Due to the close relationship Hijrah has with the Qur'an and the *ahadith*, historically Muslim scholars have sought continually to understand, implement, interpret and conceptualise Hijrah according to the times and demands of the society. As part of my ongoing research, indicative title, '*Conceptualising Hijrah in Modernity*' this presentation proposes to present some of the key findings in my literature review, in particular how traditional Muslim scholars conceptualised Muhammad's Hijrah, which proto themes ensued from their conception of Hijrah and finally their methodological approaches to Hijrah.

I completed my BA in Theology at Newman University Birmingham in 2017. This was followed up by an MA in Islamic Studies at Markfield Institute for Higher Education in 2018. Currently, I am doing a Professional Doctorate in Interfaith-Harmony at University of Wales Trinity Saint David. My thesis is looking at (still indicative) The Theological conception of Hijrah in Modernity.

7. Nithin Varghese: Sacred Violence: On Religion and Violence in Karnad's Plays

Nithin Varghese and Suman Sigroha¹

One of the most challenging subjects for scholars has been defining religion as a term and as a concept. Despite countless efforts, arriving at a perfectly tailored description of the concept is still a struggle (Cavanaugh 58). Some of them define religion as truth (Zamulinski 2003), sacred (Evans 2003, Cervigni 2007), divine (Wiles 1971), ultimate reality (Altizer 1958) and so on. However, the way it is conceptualized and interpreted has changed over the years and is still changing. The deepening relationship between religion and violence has emerged as one of the most pressing issues of our time. Although India is a fine example of religious coexistence as it enables its people to practise any religion, it has also been a witness to a range of religious violence. The English satirist and pamphleteer Jonathan Swift's assertion, "we have enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another" seems to have gained a poignant sense. Therefore, it is essential to investigate how literary texts respond to the historical events generally classified as religious violence, how they deal with the relationship between religion and violence, and how religious violence can shed light on the very essence of religion. To understand these, this paper studies the plays of Girish Karnad that articulate various forms of violence inflicted upon human beings with religious sanction. Karnad (1938-2019), who provided new directions to Indian drama through his creative and experimental works, was a critic of Indian religious fundamentalism and Hindutva. He deals with the burning issues of religion and deals with religious atrocities committed by the upper castes on the lower castes in his

plays. The paper aims to examine Karnad's plays to show the different levels at which religion functions as a punitive force in the society that holds individuals under constant surveillance, and as a result also causes people to be violent.

Keywords: Violence, Discipline, Religion, Surveillance, Karnad

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8. Hasan Ghaderi: Transmigration in the Upanishad

Undoubtedly, Transmigration has gained numerous advocates throughout history. One of the religions that has been seriously involved in Transmigration is Hinduism. Although this belief is one of the fundamental principles of this religion, we do not find any reference to this issue in *Vedas*. But after this era, this belief has enjoyed a special status in Hindu sacred books over time so that explicit references to Transmigration can be found in *Upanishads*. For this reason, since the stage of compilation of the *Upanishads*, Transmigration in Hindu beliefs has clearly been visible. Considering the importance of this issue as well as the special place of this sacred book in Hindu thought, this paper examines the subject of Transmigration in this regard by referring to a variety of beliefs. According to the *Upanishads*, creating a system for the establishment of justice in the world and the desire to live are the main reasons why humans are captive of birth and death cycle. The acquisition of knowledge or in other words jnana marga, is the way that the *Upanishads* propose to get rid of Transmigration. key words: transmigration- upanishad- hinduism

I am Hassan Ghaderi. PHD of Religions and Mysticism from Iran.

9. Ayşe Bilge Yilmaz: An Enquiry into the Roles of Effort and Grace, and Their Cosmological Implications, amongst Contemporary Gurdjieffians

In her editorial introduction to the *Fieldwork in Religion*'s special issue Carole Cusack highlights that, despite constituting an excellent area for research, scholarly engagement with G.I. Gurdjieff (1866?-1949) and his teaching (the Work/the Fourth Way) has been minimal until recently.¹ An observation, which applies all the more so to the fieldwork on 'the Work,' in relation to which the output of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge within the Academy. On the other hand, the research topic arises from the following context.

G.I. Gurdjieff's (1866?-1949) premier biographer James Moore's 1994 article 'Moveable Feasts' is of prime importance for this study, because it marks the start of the 'New Work' debate, extending the related discussion beyond the Gurdjieffian community to the Academy.² Moore draws from the classical theological dialectical tension between effort and grace, and claims that there was a change of emphasis from former to the latter, in the post-Gurdjieff era under the guidance of Jeanne de Salzmann (1889-1990), to whom Gurdjieff confided his affairs.³ Moore concludes this is a deviation ignorant of the Work's effort-saturated cosmology, a deviation in a diametrically opposite direction from the original teaching while 'still preserving its former name.'⁴ The resultant 'New Work' label, while mostly associated with the 'work in quiet,' although along with perspectival differences, embraced by other insider-scholars.⁵

A persistent topic in understanding religious experience, the dialectical tension between effort and grace received considerable scholarly attention. Some of the varying perspectives emphasize arguments such as:

1. The ultimate realization that the effort itself was due to grace,⁶
2. Bipolarity/non-exclusivity of effort and grace both doctrinally and in practice,⁷
3. The necessity of ableness to receive grace,⁸ and
4. Non-effort as the effort due to paradox of attention.⁹

The notion of effort is obviously central in 'the Work,' while the notion of grace is generally unspoken and unwritten about with notable exceptions.¹⁰

Gurdjieff genealogy has travelled manifold ways with the first-generation pupils, and without a doubt gaining further complexity today, in the time of second, third and fourth-generation pupils.¹¹ WWW is the best platform for reaching out to contemporary Gurdjieffians around the world and for promoting this research (via the research-website: www.gurdjiefftoday.com) in order to fulfill the research aim(s), which can be noted as follows:

1. The primary aim of this research, amongst the contemporary Gurdjieffians, is to enquire about the roles of effort and grace during their 'work in quiet,' and relevant cosmological implications.
2. The nature and extent of divergences between the different lineages that have emerged..
3. The perceived support of their 'work in quiet' for the most significant criteria practitioners use in drawing parallels with, or distinguishing the Fourth Way from, other religious and spiritual traditions.
4. The reciprocal relations (if any) between their 'work in quiet' and other aspects of Gurdjieff Work namely, group meetings, work intensives/weekends, study of ideas, movements/sacred dances, and the 'work in life.'

1 Carole M. Cusack, 'Fieldwork on G. I. Gurdjieff and the "Work",' *Fieldwork in Religion*, Vol.11 No.1 (2016), pp. 3-9. 2 James Moore, 'Moveable Feasts: The Gurdjieff Work,' *Religion Today*, Vol.9 No.2 (1994) pp. 11-16. 3 Tcheslaw Tchekhovitch, *Gurdjieff: A Master in Life* (Toronto: Dolmen Meadow Editions, 2006) pp. 246.; Joseph Azize, *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, and Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) pp. 221-222. 4 Moore, 'Moveable Feasts,' pp. 11-16. 5 I borrowed this phrase 'work in quiet' from Jeanne de Salzmann, *The Reality of Being: The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Shambala, 2010) pp. 116. It is distinguished from the 'work in life' by its 'conditions that are free from the demands of outer life,' pp. 81. Sophia Wellbeloved, 'G.I. Gurdjieff: Some References to Love,' *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Vol.13 No.3 (1998) pp. 321-332; Sophia Wellbeloved, 'Changes in G. I. Gurdjieff's Teaching 'The Work',' (paper presented at the 2001 Conference (CESNUR-INFORM) in London) <https://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/wellbeloved.htm> [accessed 15-11-2020]; Sophia Wellbeloved, *Gurdjieff: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 153-156; Joseph Azize, 'The Readiness is All: Gurdjieff's Art of the "Preparation",' *Religion and the Arts* Vol.21 No.1&2 (2017) pp. 40-69; Joseph Azize, *Gurdjieff: Mysticism, Contemplation, and Exercises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020) pp. 215-227 (especially pp. 224). 6 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (no place of publication: Ravenio Books, 1924) pp. 72; Ninian Smart, 'Understanding Religious Experience,' in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) pp. 10-21 in Ninian Smart on *World Religions: Volume 1: Religious Experience and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. John J. Shepherd (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) pp. 45-46. 7 George Karuvelil, *Faith, Reason, and Culture: An Essay in Fundamental Theology* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) pp. 177. 8 Ninian Smart, 'What would Buddhaghosa have Made of The Cloud of Unknowing?,' in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 103-122 in Ninian Smart on *World Religions: Volume 1: Religious Experience and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. John J. Shepherd (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) pp. 83. 9 Simone Kotva, *Effort and Grace: On the Spiritual Exercise of Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020). 10 Fran Shaw, *Notes on The Next Attention: Chandolin 1993-2000* (New York: Indications Press, 2012); Jeanne De Salzmann, *The Reality of Being: The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Shambala, 2010); James George, *Asking for Earth: Waking Up to the Spiritual/Ecological Crisis* (Dorset: Element Books Limited, 1995) pp. 96-99. 11 Kathleen Riordan Speeth. *The Gurdjieff Work* (London: Turnstone, 1977 [1976]) pp. 96-116; Johanna Petsche, 'A Gurdjieff Genealogy: Tracing the Manifold Ways the Gurdjieff Teaching has Travelled,' *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, Vol.4 No.1 (2013) pp.1-25.

Ayşe Bilge Yılmaz is currently working on her dissertation, on the presentation topic, as a part-time student in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology MA programme that is taught within the Sophia Centre for the Study of Cosmology in Culture. She is a practicing 4th/3rd generation Gurdjieffian (a student of G.I. Gurdjieff) via Jeanne de Salzmann and J.G. Bennett lineages.

10. Rebecca Louise Burn: Crossing the Boundary: The Depiction of Transgression, Loss, and Grief in Early Medieval Welsh and Irish poetry

The universal themes of transgression, loss, and grief appear as a common trope in much Celtic literature, however, these themes have rarely been the focus of comparative analysis of corresponding texts. Lyric poems, characterised by a persona's emotional and psychological responses to personal suffering, constitute an extensive body of work in which transgression, loss, and grief are the prevailing themes. Conflict (physical or metaphysical) is often at the root of the individual's suffering, to which no simple answer is provided.

This presentation will examine the literary depiction of transgression, loss, and grief in a selection of poems from both Welsh and Irish medieval traditions; and secondly, it will consider how these themes, as presented in the texts, correlate with the notion of 'crossing a boundary', either geographical, or moral. In the 9th or 10th century Welsh saga englynion, the *Canu Llywarch Hen* ('The song of Llywarch the Old'), Llywarch Hen inculcates the heroic code in his sons but in doing so, loses them in battle. He feels he has transgressed against his sons (a moral boundary) resulting in his conflicting inner turmoil, and sense of guilt. In *Canu Heledd*, ('Song of Heledd'), a transgression by the English (the crossing of a geographical boundary with Wales), results in the fall of the kingdom of Powys, of which Heledd is the last surviving member. Lamenting the loss of family and lands, she wanders aimlessly, experiencing obsessional sorrow. The notion of suffering as catharsis shares parallels with the wild man of the woods legend, as embodied in native Welsh tradition by Myrddin Gwylt, and in Irish tradition by Suibne Geilt. The connections between these two literary personas are well-attested. The personal suffering and

mental breakdown experienced by both personas is depicted almost as an act of atonement for crossing moral boundaries, (Myrddin's killing of his nephew at the north-British battle of Arthuret (Arfderydd), in AD 573 and Suibne's killing of St Ronan's cleric, and subsequent loss of reason at the Battle of Mag Rath in 637).

Similarly, in a small body of lyric poetry, Triamhuin Ghormlaithe, the Irish queen, Gormlaith (ob. 948) laments her pitiful state and the loss of her husband, Niall Glúndub who fell in battle in AD 919. The grief and madness suffered by Merlin in Geoffrey of Monmouth's poem *Vita Merlini* (1148-51) also accords with the native Welsh poems of Myrddin.

Although it is acknowledged in medieval scholarship, that the interpretation of early literature is enhanced through analysis of analogous texts, the comparative study of a body of textual sources is severely restricted by the imposition of linguistic and cultural boundaries. Examining the nature of human response to transgression, loss, and grief, this presentation aims to place these texts in the wider context of Celtic literary tradition, thereby offering a fresh perspective on the medieval world view.

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Rebecca is a mature student studying the MA Celtic Studies programme by distance learning at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. Prior to embarking on the course, Rebecca was a professional musician and drama lecturer. Rebecca has a BMus(Hons) in music from the University of Huddersfield and an MPhil in Drama

and Theatre Studies from the University of Birmingham. The universal themes of transgression, loss, and grief appear as a common trope in much Celtic literature.

Rebecca's presentation focusses on the depiction of these powerful human experiences in a selection of early Welsh and Irish medieval lyric poetry.

11. Emmeke Vierhout: 'What does the word "I" refer to?

The question 'What does the word "I" refer to?' seems like a straightforward and simple question, however when trying to give a straightforward and simple answer, you find that it contains a manifold of sub questions. And in my search for finding an answer I was drawn into this swamp of questions concerning concepts like "Personal Identity", "Self" and "Soul", "Mind and Body" and so on. The way to get out of this swamp is to stop seeing "I" as a referring expression. Even though it might seem in some uses to be a referring expression, this is not really the case. The meaning of the word "I" lies in its use, its use indicates the presence of self-consciousness. Human beings are self-conscious beings, meaning that they have the capacity to experience themselves 'as themselves', which is an experience of themselves in an immediate way, not as an object but as the subject of experience. This experience as subject is immune to error through misidentification. It is perfectly possible for someone who has lost his memory and thus has no idea who he is, to use the word "I" in a meaningful way, in the same way as someone who is completely lost in the dark can say that he is "here" without knowing where that is.

The meaning of "I" lies not in its reference, but in its user; the word "I" can only meaningfully be used in the subjective sense by a user that has self-consciousness and that can consider itself as 'itself'. The use of the word "I" does not refer to anything, it indicates the presence of self-consciousness, just like the use of the word "auch" does not refer to pain but only indicates the presence of pain. The use of the word "I" indicates the presence of self-consciousness, either in a direct, immediate way to the user self, or indirectly to a listener; the use of "I" indicates a Self as user.

Then what is this Self? A Self, I will argue, is a biological organism which has self-consciousness, can consider itself as 'itself' and has agency. In the case of humans, the Self is nothing above and beyond the self-conscious human being. The minimal condition for being a Self is that the system has self-representation about itself 'as itself', the latter being the creation of a self-model which is a unity created of self-relating information. Aspects of a typical human Self are amongst others: the notion of 'personhood'; the notion of 'individuality'; the notion of 'ownership'; the notion of 'appearance' and the notion of a 'narrative'. But the crucial element I will argue, in being a Self is that a Self has agency in this world and can alter the world.

And so the use of the word "I" indicates the presence of a Self and with that it indicates the possibility to escape from physical determinism; it indicates the possibility to change the course of nature.

My name is Emmeke Vierhout, I am Dutch but have lived with my family on a farm in Ukraine for the past 14 years. I am doing an MA in philosophy through long distance learning at the UWTSD. My main interests lie in the nature of morality and in the idea of agency in human beings. I have just begun with my dissertation which will be on Moral Decision Making and Artificial intelligence.

12. Lisa Lynn Whitsett: Dualism and Beyond: Philosophy and the Future of the Mind

When free thinkers gather to explore the complex relationship between the mind and the body, Rene Descartes' texts usually have a seat at their table. Descartes' Discourse on the Method (1637) and Meditations on First Philosophy (1641) and have earned their reputations as highly influential reading in metaphysics and in philosophy of mind. Some who agree with Descartes tend to support a mind-body dualism, the idea that human mental phenomena are non-physical or that the mind and body are quite distinct and separate. Some challenge this paradigm and take a materialist view, holding the belief that conscious human minds are the product of physical brain activity.

Variants of the mind-body relationship extend far beyond the fields of philosophy and other humanities. Fervent exploration of the mind-body relationship is now fueled by research in adjacent disciplines such as cognitive science, neuroscience, and technology. For example, professionals in brain science and in artificial intelligence advance research agendas in the mind-body problem to improve healthcare, to inform policy, and to develop global safety techniques. Particularly as technologies continue to advance, the boundaries among minds, bodies, and our environment becomes more fluid. This in turn leads to more philosophical questions including those about personhood, security, and rights to privacy. Many in non-humanities disciplines are relying on those with philosophy and humanities backgrounds to step up and actively participate in these highly complex, challenging issues. If free thinkers and philosophers are to contribute meaningfully to

these conversations, acquiring some fluency in the fundamentals of the mind-body problem is important.

Therefore, I propose a paper and presentation in two sections. The first section analyzes two of Descartes' mind-body conclusions. One of his conclusions is that the mind and body are separate. Another conclusion is that the human body is akin to a machine. I find several of Descartes' premises—including that he can doubt the existence of his own body and that his mind is indivisible—questionable. Therefore, I argue that Descartes provides inadequate justification for his conclusion that mind and body are separate and distinct. Further, I argue that Descartes' comparison of the human body to a machine lacks force. The purpose of this first section is not to argue that mind-body dualism is necessarily false; the purpose is to demonstrate that Descartes' reasoning does not convince me that dualism is true.

This doubt opens the door to explore additional directions in the mind-body problem. In section two of the presentation, I will introduce recent research from philosophers Dr. Karina Vold, Dr. Andy Clark, and Dr. David Chalmers which explores the future of the mind.

Specifically, I will examine some key ideas in extended and augmented minds. The presentation concludes having shed light on both traditional and contemporary issues in the philosophy of mind

Lisa Whitsett is a graduate of University of California San Diego with a BA in sociology. She graduated from the University of Northern Iowa with an MA in mental health. She holds professional certification in strategic foresight from the University of Houston, College of Technology.

Professionally, she has worked as a consultant for global business organizations in applied psychology, human resources, and leadership development for 25 years.

She is the author of *Beneath the Armor of an Athlete* which explores the development of self and identity in athletes.

She is currently a UWTSD student in second semester of MA philosophy. She has special interests in philosophy of mind (including animal minds), extended cognition, artificial and augmented intelligence.

Lisa lives in United States in the state of Texas with partner of 30 years, Steve, and three wonderful furry children: two dogs and one cat.