

## Annual Meeting November 2000 in Nashville

### CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers are invited on the following topics:

1. *Beyond the opposition of Western/sovereign vs. non-Western/interdependent selves: new data and new models of persons*; and
2. *Seeing clients: what are we doing when we do psychotherapy? What are the values and dangers in diagnoses and treatment plans?*

Papers dealing with other themes on self, culture, and religion are also welcome. Send proposals to Lucy Bregman, Dept. of Religion, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 19122; OF: 215-204-1747; E-mail: bregman@vm.temple.edu.

The deadline for proposals is March 3. For more information visit the AAR's web site: [www.aar-site.org](http://www.aar-site.org).

### PRESESSION PREVIEW

The program for the PCR Pressessions at the 2000 AAR/SBL Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee is already taking shape. Events on the program will include:

- *Serpent Handling Christians*  
Ralph Hood  
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
- *Religious and Psychological Approaches to Film*  
Lewis Rambo  
San Francisco Theological Seminary
- *The Revival of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion*  
Jacob Belzen  
University of Amsterdam

### Future AAR/SBL Annual Meeting Locations

2001: Denver ♦ 2002: Toronto ♦ 2003: Atlanta ♦ 2004: San Antonio ♦ 2005 : Philadelphia

## Special Session: Psychological Interpretation of Religious Experience

The Person Culture and Religion Group will co-sponsor a special panel with History of Christianity at the Nashville 2000 AAR meeting. The theme of the panel is the Psychological Interpretation of Religious Experience, and the History of Psychological Interpretation. The specific focus is a discussion of two books: *Augustine: the Scattered and Gathered Self* by Sandy Dixon, and *Fits, Trances and Visions* by Ann

Taves. We are presently inviting panelists to participate. There will be a chance to discuss the possibilities and limits of psychological interpretations within the study of religious history. The chair of the newly-formed Consultation on Augustine and Augustinianisms has been alerted about the session, and he has promised to pass the information along to his membership.

### In This Issue:

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## New PCR Newsletter Format

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This issue of the PCR Newsletter comes to you in a new, expanded, and (it is hoped) fully intact format. Over the past few years several PCR members have told me their Newsletters had been mangled by the post office, or arrived without the interior pages, or had been smeared by the rain, etc. To alleviate those problems the PCR Newsletter will now be sent in an envelope, a slightly more expensive but surely more secure means of getting the issue to you. The added expense will hopefully be offset by the increasing number of PCR members who are receiving the Newsletter electronically.

This new format has the added benefit of allowing us to include more information in each issue. All PCR members are invited to contribute material to the Newsletter, including:

- News of your own publications, teaching activities, travels, and scholarly interests.
- Notices of new books and articles you think are significant for the PCR community.
- Commentaries, opinions, and book reviews of up to 1000 words.
- Announcements of conferences, workshops, symposia, journals, etc.
- Descriptions of groups, organizations, and associations involved in PCR-type activities.

I especially encourage PCR members to write commentaries and reviews— think of the Newsletter as an opportunity to express your "Op-Ed" views on the most important issues in the field. Two such opinion pieces are included in the present issue.

Please note my new email address: [kellybulkeley@earthlink.net](mailto:kellybulkeley@earthlink.net)

Thanks, and I look forward to hearing from you.

*Kelly Bulkeley, Editor*

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## Report from the 1999 AAR/SBL Meeting in Boston

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*Should the AAR and the SBL Go Their Separate Ways?*

The main topic of discussion at the 1999 AAR/SBL Program Unit Meeting was the increasingly unwieldy size of the annual meeting's program. Barbara Diconcini, AAR Executive Director, reported that close to 9000 people registered for this year's meeting in Boston, and the program committee is feeling a growing pressure to do something to protect the logistical viability of the annual meeting. The committee is therefore sharply limiting the number of new program units it will accept each year, and it is also looking to reduce from three to two the number of times an individual may appear on the program.

Most controversially, the AAR is reconsidering its joint meeting agreement with the SBL, an agreement which currently runs through 2005. The advantages of splitting the annual meeting between the two groups would be 1) reducing the overall meeting size, 2) expanding the range of possible times and locations for the annual meeting, and 3) eliminating the

appearance that the AAR is privileging one faith tradition over all others. The major drawbacks would be 1) the burden on many joint AAR/SBL members to choose which group's meeting to attend, and 2) the loss of scholarly exchange between the two associations.

After a lengthy and passionate discussion about these issues, Executive Director Diconcini asked for a straw vote among the approximately 100 program unit chairpeople and steering committee members in attendance at the meeting. Half of the people voted yes, half voted no.

Diconcini said the whole AAR membership would be invited to participate in further discussion about this matter, through the AAR website and other venues. PCR members who feel strongly one way or the other should contact the AAR to voice their opinions.

**Jacqueline Lewis** (Drew University) is involved in several areas of research: adolescent development, faith/morality development, Rizutto's notion of how images of God are formed in childhood, racial identity, black psychology, and Womanist theology. She recommends two books relating to these subjects: *The Analyst in the Inner City*, by Neil Altman (The Analytic Press, 1995), and *Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Power*, by Elaine Pinderhughes (The Free Press, 1989).

**Dan Merkur** announces the publication of his new book, *The Mystery of Manna: The Psychedelic Sacrament of the Bible* (Park Street Press, 2000).

**Lee Bailey** (Ithaca College) is focusing his current research on the topic of depth psychology and spirituality in technology. He is teaching courses on "Spirituality and Journalism" and "Religion and the Environment," and has syllabi available on request (Dept. of Philosophy and Religion, Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY 14850).

**Judith Kay** (University of Puget Sound) has recently published an essay titled, "In the Shadow of the Execution Chamber: Affirming Wholeness in a Broken Place," which draws on her experiences in death row ministry. The essay discusses the virtues that spiritual advisors must exercise in order to avoid complicity with the machinery of death. It appeared in the book *Practice What You Preach: Virtue, Ethics, and Power in the Lives of Parish Ministers and their Congregations*, edited by Keenan and Kotva (Sheed and Ward, 1999). Judith is eager to know if any other PCR/AAR people are involved in this kind of work.

**Frances Adeney** (Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary) came to her new position in Louisville this past Fall as the William A. Benfield Jr. Associate Professor of Evangelism and Mission. During 1997-99 she held the Distinguished Visiting Brooks Professorship of Religion at the University of Southern California. Her areas of concentration are sociology of religion and social ethics, and she has a forthcoming book titled *Making Oneself Strange: Gender Ideology, Moral Development, and Social Change in Indonesia* (University of Syracuse Press), which will be based on her research on Indonesian women who are breaking into leadership and academia in Christian theology.

**Kristen Leslie** (Yale Divinity School) is teaching introductory and intermediate level pastoral theology, care, and counseling courses. Her classes have included Feminist Pastoral Psychology, Pastoral Care in a Violent World, Intercultural Pastoral Care and Counseling, Pastoral Care with Young Adults, and Womanist/Feminist Issues in Pastoral Care. Her current research revolves around issues raised in her dissertation, *Pastoral Care and Counseling with Survivors of Acquaintance Rape*, which she just successfully defended in December.

**Dan Noel** (Pacifica Graduate Institute) is planning on teaching two courses for the summer of 2000: "Myths and Images in Cross-Cultural Perspective," focusing on Native American topics, and "Cultural Mythologies," on millennial matters. He recommends the book *Believed-In Imaginings: The Narrative Construction of Reality*, edited by J. de Rivera and T.R. Sarbin (American Psychological Association, 1998).

## News from PCR Members

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### From the PCR Chair

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At our 2000 meeting in Nashville, 3 of our steering committee members and I, the chair, are scheduled to end our terms of service. We need volunteers to replace us, although a possible plan is to have some of us stay on for an extra year. This would preserve necessary continuity. The group will come up for review *in the year following 2001* and it would be good to have more experienced people to handle the review process. The new AAR policy is that at the time a group is reviewed, a number of sessions will

be allocated to it, anywhere from 1 to 3. This is a change from the current policy of simply giving each group an automatic two sessions, plus one co-sponsored one. A good review is therefore essential in order to preserve our range of programming opportunities. Anyone who wants to volunteer for the steering committee, or who has questions about the responsibilities involved, may e-mail me at [bregman@vm.temple.edu](mailto:bregman@vm.temple.edu).

*Lucy Bregman*

## PCR COMMENTARY

I have been inspired by the session on “Selves and Boundaries,” especially by the interesting intersection between the papers that were given and Carroll Watkins Ali’s book *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context*, to address this topic from a slightly different perspective. Dr. Ali’s call to hear the voices and experiences of poor black women is also a call to elucidate the psychological and experiential foundations of diversity. We need to take seriously the depth and origins of the differences in *experience* of self among various ethnic groups, cultures, and socioeconomic strata. Cultural understanding of what constitutes a person is not a matter of theory or philosophy: it is embodied knowledge, affecting all dimensions of individual, social, and religious life.

Research into concepts and attitudes regarding individuality, human relationships, body and soul, self and deity, family and social connections, emotions, etc., within a particular culture or subculture can appear to be an intellectual exercise. After all, we are working within the academic sphere. It is essential to understand, however, that these “concepts” are not merely ideas, but are in fact the way that people experience themselves, their connections with others, and their relation to the divine. These are not choices but rather embodied modes of perception and connection. The non-discretionary nature of an individual’s or culture’s perspective on identity is fundamental and needs to be taken into account when discussing contrasting concepts of self, as does Ms. Davy in her presentation “Sovereignty and Belonging: Narratives of Self with Others.” She is certainly correct in saying that an “un-positioned account” is not possible, I would go further and say that our position is not of our own choosing.

How do we understand the “self”? Moreover, how do we experience the “self”? There is not one universal understanding among different cultures; within the academic community as well there are a variety of theories of self—social self, medical self, spiritual self, and many more. This comes as no great revelation, I am sure. But the study of Psychological Anthropology, especially in conjunction with Religious Studies, reveals the range and depth of differ-

## CULTURE AND THE EMBODIED “SELF” REFLECTIONS ON THE 1999 PRESESSION ON SELVES AND BOUNDARIES REBECCA SACHS NORRIS

ence between one person’s experience and another’s. Our sense of ourselves as embodied beings, our experience of ourselves in time and space, our relations with people and perceptions of the world, how we feel our emotions and sensations or interpret our thoughts—in short, our entire experience as human beings—all these are informed by our cultural and religious environments.

The range of experiences available to an individual within a particular culture is based upon enculturated ideas and knowledge. For instance, the Christian idea of a hierarchical self makes possible the experience of different levels of prayer. American upper-middle class concepts of the self “unfolding” enable that experience. So too, in such cultures as the Hamadsha of Morocco, belief in possession provides the basis for their *dhikr* ritual—a combination of Islamic practice and trance through which individuals are healed. An individual’s bodily, emotional, intellectual and spiritual experience at all levels and depths is informed by and comprehended through cultural and religious contexts. There are always exceptions and contradictions, of course, where an individual’s experience does not correspond with social and psychological expectations; these are usually interpreted as being caused by sacred inspiration, possession or mental illness. Ultimately though, the very experience of self depends on cultural and religious concepts of self, and is learned.

How well do we understand the processes through which individuals, as embodied beings, become enculturated? After all, we are not disembodied minds, abstract personalities, or incorporeal souls. “Self-construal” is not a theoretical procedure; it relies upon the fundamental nature and qualities of our bodies—qualities that range from crude to transcendent. To say that experience of the world and even of the divine is grounded in the body is not to reduce the transcendent to the “merely” material. It is rather to explore the nature and dimensions of embodied experience, mundane or sacred. Our bodies are not closed bounded entities, but marvelous instruments

*(Continued on page 5)*

that are capable of incredible sensitivity, refinement and transformation of perception, and a wide range of sensation and emotion.

The process of enculturation entails not merely repetition and imitation, but experiential development as well. How is it that we learn not merely outer forms but corresponding inner states as well? The human organism is porous: that is, impressions and information pass directly from the "outside" world to the "inner." From the moment we are born we are exposed to prevalent cultural and religious knowledge and belief regarding the nature of human beings. Posture and gesture, moral codes, cognition of emotion, and so on are perceived and communicated through all the types of intelligence that our organism encompasses: intellectual, emotional, and sensory. Malleability, multi-dimensional memory, and the direct perception of impressions of the world are some of the qualities of the human organism that enable learning of new inner states and transformation of old ones. The senses are capable of experiencing impressions of different depths, from seeing, hearing, and touch, to much subtler impressions, including the direct perception of emotion, kinesthetic sense, and recognition of another's inner state. It is the body's own intelligence that makes this possible: an intelligence that is characterized by an immediate, pre-rational, non-verbal perception of the world. Unlike the intellect, bodily intelligence is not affected by contradiction, and is capable of perceiving multiple meanings from one impression. This polysemic intelligence works in "parallel" rather than "serial," to borrow computing terms. The "reading" of one's cultural code and the consequent ability to function within that context result from the sum of the organism's capabilities. This being the case, Dr. Bush's study of how migration affects identity "Interdependent Self and Religious Experience in Polynesian Contexts" is particularly interesting, since habitation in an alien environment requires not merely reorientation of concepts or beliefs, but adaptation of embodied responses and knowledge.

Although there is a general acknowledgment of our embodied state and, in contemporary times, a more holistic view of the self that includes the body, these attitudes exist as theoretical ideas, not as fundamental insights. Functioning well in one's environ-

ment includes not only the proper communication and perception of symbols and signals, but goes to the very depths of experiencing one's being in the world. Although it seems paradoxical, it is through acknowledgment of the depth of difference in our experience—which goes to the very roots of our being—that we can begin to understand our common ground as embodied, experiencing selves.

*Suggested further reading:*

- Asad, T. *Genealogies of Religion*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Coakley, S., ed., *Religion and the Body*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Csordas, T. *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, Cambridge: University Press, 1994 and *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: Univ. of California Press, 1994.
- Kusserow, A.S. "De-Homogenizing American Individualism: Socializing Hard and Soft Individualism in Manhattan and Queens," *Ethos*, June, 1999, Vol. 27, No. 2.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. and M. Lock. "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, March, 1987, V.1, No.1.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. *Giving the Body Its Due*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Shweder, R. and R. LeVine, eds. 1984. *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Strathern, A. *Body Thoughts*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Young, K., ed. *Bodylore*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

*Rebecca Sachs Norris received her Ph.D. in May, 1999 from The University Professors at Boston University. Her dissertation was entitled "The Body in Prayer: A Comparative Study." She is currently teaching a course based on her dissertation at the Boston University School of Theology. Her academic interests also include Death and Identity, Gesture, Music and Trance, Conversion, and Sacred Dance.*

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The 1999 PCR Session on "Evaluations of Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams on the Centennial of its Original Publication" generated a lively discussion among the five panelists (Pamela Cooper-White, James Dicenso, Diane Jonte-Pace, Allan Hobson, and Peter Homans) and the large audience in attendance. Much of the discussion revolved around the comments of Hobson, a neuroscientist at Harvard Medical School, who made a very forceful argument for the decisive importance of current brain research in any conversation about Freud, psychology, and religion.

At least two audience members (James Jones and Bonnie Miller-McLemore, if memory serves) made the astute "meta"-observation that although five panelists had spoken, almost all the discussion was focusing on the most "scientific" of the presentations. I believe their observation raises an important question about how the PCR realm of inquiry is related to the "harder" sciences involved in research on the mind/brain system. The fact that so many people in the audience were interested in hearing more about Hobson's work was a clear sign that this subject deserves greater attention. However, the concern I heard in the two "meta"-observations was that the tremendous cultural authority of capital-S Science can have a steamroller effect on the more nuanced and multidisciplinary discourse of PCR scholarship.

As Chair of the panel I did not feel it appropriate for me to argue with the particular details of Hobson's basic theory. But in the interest of promoting a constructive (rather than reductionistic) engagement of PCR inquiry with new findings in cognitive neuroscience, I want to mention two particular points which Hobson neglected to mention and which I believe are directly relevant to any attempt to connect his field of research with the study of religion. (A more detailed critique of Hobson can be found in Chapter 8 of my book *Visions of the Night* (SUNY, 1999).)

1. *REM Sleep and Dreaming are Not Identical.* Hobson didn't say so, but his basic theory is being vigorously challenged by another neuroscientist,

Mark Solms (*The Neuropsychology of Dreams*, Lawrence Erlbaum, 1997). The argument gets quite technical, but the gist of it is that Hobson's theory depends on an isomorphism of REM sleep and dreaming, which means that if you know the function of REM sleep, you know the function of dreaming. Solms's research, however, shows that REM sleep and dreaming are not identical, and that dreaming depends on a complex array of brain functions we do not yet fully understand. If Solms is right, his work refutes Hobson's effort to reduce dreaming to the random nonsense produced by REM sleep.

2. *Top-Down Influences.* Hobson's theory is a "bottom-up" theory: he says the psychological experience of dreaming originates with the neurological activities of REM sleep. But during the discussion time an audience member mentioned the phenomenon of "lucid dreaming," in which a person has some conscious awareness during the dream of being in a dream state. Hobson answered that such dreams may involve an aberrant kind of "dissociation" in which other parts of the brain/mind are activated. But those PCR members who attended the earlier panel on Buddhism and Psychology heard a discussion of how several Buddhist traditions have developed highly sophisticated techniques of cultivating different states of consciousness in dreaming. These techniques suggest that dreaming can be influenced by "top-down" as well as "bottom-up" forces. The implications of that possibility are vast: In what ways

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Person, Culture & Religion Group

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What Hobson Didn't Say (Continued from page 6)

do religions shape and train the dreaming imagination? Do Buddhists have different dreams than Christians? Do religious people have different dreams than scientific people? When are the "top-down" influences of culture positive, enhancing people's imaginative freedom and creativity, and when might those influences be negative, imposing oppressive ideological structures on people's minds?

Taken together, these two points of criticism support the panel's other respondent, Peter Homans, in

his reference to Paul Ricoeur's focus on the dynamic tension between force and meaning in psychoanalytic theory. Despite Hobson's reductionistic emphasis on the "bottom-up" forces at work in dreaming, the evidence is strong that dreaming involves a creative, two-way interaction between those forces and the "top-down" meanings conveyed by religion and other cultural traditions.

Kelly Bulkeley  
Santa Clara University

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## PCR Membership

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Membership in PCR entitles you to three copies of PCR News, goodies at the Friday pre-session, advance copies of the papers for PCR sessions, plus the warm glow of knowing that you're helping us distribute PCR-related information to scholars, clinicians, and clergy members interested in our work.

\$15.00 Regular Membership; \$10.00 Student Membership (with copy of student ID). Checks should be payable to Person, Culture, & Religion Group. Send to: Kelly Bulkeley, Secretary/Treasurer, 226 Amherst Avenue, Kensington CA 94708; Phone: 510-528-0226; Fax is same; E-mail: [kellybulkeley@earthlink.net](mailto:kellybulkeley@earthlink.net) 1999 paid members to date are listed below; if you think we missed you, contact Kelly Bulkeley at the address above.

Lee Bailey  
Bill Barnard  
J.A. Belzen  
Kathleen Bishop  
Lucy Bregman  
Kelly Bulkeley  
Pam Couture  
Valerie DeMarinis

Sandra Lee Dixon  
Nancy Grace  
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Christopher Ross  
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## PCR Steering Committee 1998-99

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I. These days I find myself thinking about . . .

CURRENT RESEARCH INTERESTS AND WRITING

II. What we need is a good course in . . .

COURSES BEING TAUGHT OR PLANNED

Would a syllabus be available on request? yes\_\_\_ no\_\_\_

III. Have you seen ? . . .

ARTICLES, BOOKS AND PRESENTATIONS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE  
TO BRING TO OUR ATTENTION  
[PLEASE GIVE FULL CITATION IF KNOWN]

IV. INFORMATION OF GENERAL INTEREST [calls for papers, announcements, travel, promotions,  
job searches . . anything you would like to share in the newsletter]

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