

Open to All College Members and Affiliates

**Royal College of Psychiatrists
Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/spirit**

Programme for Friday April 3rd 2009

**Venue: Society of Chemical Industry
15 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PS**

‘Consciousness and the Extended Mind’

**Programme Organiser: Dr. Tim Read
Chair: Dr. Andrew Powell**

This programme brings together three pioneers in the field of consciousness research. Each, with a distinguished academic background, has crossed the frontiers of conventional science in search of an explanation of phenomena, both objective and subjective, that transcend the bounds of space and time. The spiritual implications of this wider vision of reality will be considered, and its relationship to mental healthcare.

- 10.15 Registration and Coffee
- 10.45 Notices: **Dr. Sarah Eagger, SIG Chair**
- 11.00 **‘The Extended Mind: Recent Experimental Evidence’**
Dr. Rupert Sheldrake
- 12.15 Lunch
- 1.30 **‘Wider human consciousness as shown by death and dying’**
Dr. Peter Fenwick
- 2.45 **‘Beyond Death: What might survive and what might the Afterlife be like?’**
Professor David Fontana
- 4.00 Tea and Plenary, with speakers
- 5.00 Close

Programme Notes:

The Extended Mind: Recent Experimental Evidence

Dr. Rupert Sheldrake

We have been brought up to believe that the mind is located inside the head. But there are good reasons for thinking that this view is much too limited. Recent experimental results show that people can influence others at a distance just by looking at them, even if they look from behind and if all sensory clues are eliminated. And people's intentions can be detected by animals from miles away. But perhaps the commonest kind of non-local interaction mental influence occurs in connection with telephone calls, where most people have had the experience of thinking of someone shortly before they ring, or knowing who is calling when the phone starts ringing. Recent experiments on telephone telepathy have given highly significant positive results. The mind may be extended not only in space but also in time. We may all draw upon a collective memory, similar to the collective unconscious postulated by C.G. Jung. I will show how my hypothesis of morphic fields and morphic resonance could provide a new way of understanding the extended mind, and of going beyond the usual mind/brain problem.

About the speaker:

Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist and author of more than 75 [scientific papers](#) and ten books (see www.sheldrake.org). A former Research Fellow of the Royal Society, he studied natural sciences at Cambridge University, where he was a Scholar of Clare College, took a double first class honours degree and was awarded the University Botany Prize. He then studied philosophy at Harvard University before returning to Cambridge, where he took a Ph.D. in biochemistry. He was a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, where he carried out research on the development of plants and the ageing of cells and where he was also Director of Studies in biochemistry and cell biology.

From 1968 to 1969, based in the Botany Department of the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, he studied rain forest plants. From 1974 to 1985 he worked at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in Hyderabad, India, where he was Principal Plant Physiologist. While in India, he also lived for a year and a half at the ashram of Fr Bede Griffiths in Tamil Nadu, where he wrote his first book, *A New Science of Life*.

He is the current [Perrott-Warrick Scholar](#) and Director of the Perrott-Warrick Project. He is also a Fellow of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, near San Francisco, and an Academic Director and Visiting Professor at the Graduate Institute in Connecticut

Wider human consciousness as shown by death and dying

Dr. Peter Fenwick

The concept of mind beyond the brain and extended consciousness is slowly gathering scientific credibility. There is some evidence from the meditation literature that points in this direction, and the work of Jacobo Grinberg showing the linking effects of empathy pushed this concept further. Recently our group has been looking at end of life phenomena and this too gives some indication that consciousness is extended beyond the brain. Our study of the dying process suggests that we do not die alone and that the dying report usually dead relatives who come to collect them and help them through the dying process. It is difficult to fit this description into a materialistic framework and certainly, the dying see it from a transcendent point of view. The cardiac arrest data suggest that mind and brain may be separate. There is clear evidence of extended mind in the occurrence of deathbed coincidences, which have very specific features depending on the mental state of the recipient. The phenomena at the moment of, and just after, death support this view.

About the speaker:

Dr. Peter Fenwick is an Emeritus consultant neuropsychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital, where he ran the Epilepsy/Neuropsychiatry Unit for 15 years. He was educated at Trinity College Cambridge and qualified at St. Thomas's Hospital. He obtained an MRC Fellowship to the National Hospital Queen Square, and did his post-graduate psychiatric training at the Middlesex Hospital, before coming to the Maudsley where he became a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychological Medicine.

Peter has held consultant posts at the Radcliffe Infirmary, where he was attached as neuropsychiatrist to the epilepsy surgery programme, and to Broadmoor Special Hospital where he is clinically responsible for the clinical neurophysiology services. For a number of years he ran the neurophysiology services at St. Thomas's and Westminster Hospitals. He now holds Honorary Appointments as a Senior Lecturer in neuropsychiatry at Kings College Institute of Psychiatry and Southampton University Department of Medicine, Neuropsychiatry Unit. He has recently been working at the Neurosciences Institute at Riken, Tokyo, Japan where he has been researching into MEG brain activity. He is a specialist in sleep disorders and has a medico-legal practice, which is particularly concerned with automatism and the law. He has for a long time had an interest in the nature of consciousness, mystical states and near death experiences and more recently, end of life experiences.

Beyond Death: What Might Survive and what Might the Afterlife be Like?

Professor David Fontana

Extensive evidence has been published over the last century and a quarter on survival of physical death, but less attention has been given to such associated questions as what aspects of the individual's consciousness and personality may survive and what might the afterlife be like? However, experiences such as deathbed visions (by the dying and by those at their bedside), Near Death Experiences, Out of the Body Experiences, apparitions, reports by mental and physical mediums of contact with the deceased, and the teachings of the spiritual and mystical traditions do in fact provide us with a wealth of information that can help us answer these questions.

The presentation will briefly survey samples of this information and draw attention to the consistency between many of the samples and the consequent implication that consciousness, memory, sensory awareness and personal characteristics endure at least for a time after physical death. Reference will also be made to the numerous reports of such things as a past-life review, a period of atonement or purgatory, the presence of a recognisable quasi-physical environment, the possibility of reincarnation, the presence of so-called Hades conditions, the emphasis upon the mental nature of the next world, and the concept of levels of development and of continuing spiritual progress.

About the speaker:

David Fontana, Ph.D., was formerly Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Cardiff University and is currently Visiting Professor of Transpersonal Psychology at Liverpool John Moores University. He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and the author of 42 books on psychology and on such topics as dreams, meditation, and personal and spiritual development. His books have been translated into 26 languages, and include bestselling titles such as *The Meditator's Handbook*, *The Secret Language of Symbols*, *Psychology Religion and Spirituality*, and *Is There an Afterlife?* (joint winner of the Scientific and Medical Network Book Prize). His most recent book, *Beyond Death*, which looks at the nature of a possible afterlife, is currently in press. He is a Former President of the Society for Psychical Research, and currently serves as a Vice President and as Chair of the Society's Survival Research Committee. He was instrumental in founding the Transpersonal Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society, and is the Section's Foundation Chair.

Registration:

This meeting is open to all Members and Affiliates of the College, and personal guests by invitation of College members. The registration fee is **£60**, to include lunch and refreshments. To book, contact Sue Duncan, The Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PG Tel: 0207 235 2351 ext. 130 and please have your College membership number to hand.

Early booking is offered to SIG members through News and Notes, which includes an application form.