

Editorial

Bettina E. Schmidt, Editor-in-Chief

We celebrate with this issue ten years of the Journal of the Study of Religious Experience. The first issue in 2015 marked a change in the direction of the Religious Experience Research Centre which was relaunched in 2014 with a conference in Lampeter that led to the first edited volume under the new leadership (Schmidt 2016). That first issue highlights two essays from the point of view of the psychology of religion by Leslie Francis, Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust, to study scientifically religious experience with his application of the Francis-Louden Mystical Orientation Scale in mystical experience, and from that of theology with Jeff Astley, first Alister Hardy Professor on the debate on scientific reductionism.

Since then, following the footsteps of Sir Alister Hardy who had pointed at his interest in the anthropological approach to the study of religious experience, the research centre nurtured anthropological projects and awarded honorary research fellowships to Dr Emily Pierini and Dr Jack Hunter. Their involvement led to fascinating special issues of the Journal that reflected the new areas of research in the study of religious experience and looked at future perspectives, respectively *Fieldwork in Religion: Bodily Experience and Ethnographic Knowledge* (2016, edited by Emily together with Alberto Groisman, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brazil), and *Religious Experience and Ecology* (2021, edited by Jack).

In total we published 12 issues over the years, six regular issues consisting of a range of articles by former postgraduate students at the University to early career researchers and established scholars in the field, and six special issues. Next to the two special issues mentioned above, these concerned, religion, culture and extraordinary experiences with guest editors Gregory Shushan (in 2018), also including in this issue a special section on the noted anthropologist Edith Turner (1921-2016); and on Halloween with Andrew Dean (in 2024). Another special issue of the journal honoured Peggy Morgan, one of the previous directors of the Religious Experience Research Centre with a Festschrift and papers from the 50th anniversary conference reflecting *The Future of the Study of Religious and Spiritual Experience* (both published in 2021). The Festschrift was organised in collaboration with Prof Wendy Dossett, University of Chester and Andrew Burns, former honorary secretary of the Alister Hardy Trust.

We are proud to offer open access publications without any charge to the authors as it enables scholars in all stages of their career to publish their research. We also celebrate the international reach of the Journal which over the years published articles from scholars working across the globe. While the authors are predominately in the UK, we saw a growing number of submissions from colleagues from continental Europe but also the US, Brazil and other countries outside Europe. With each issue the Journal increases its visibility which leads to an increasing number of submissions (though not all fall into the remit of the Journal or lack the required academic rigour). Since last year, the Journal is sent to the AHT-members thereby informing them of the publication of the Journal as soon as it is published online. We cordially thank Rachel Dowd, the AHT Membership Administrator, for her assistance.

The growing number of submissions has increased the workload. Initially Tom Pitchford who worked in the RERC office handled the administrative side as well as proof-reading and editing, and I am enormously grateful for all the work he put in to get the Journal started. After his premature death in 2021, Jack Hunter kindly agreed to take over this role. Jack also contributed several articles and edited the special issue on ecology and spiritual experience, a topic close to the heart of Alister Hardy. In 2024, Mara Steenhuisen who had already contributed a paper to the Journal, joined the team and worked with Jack on the regular 2023 issue. She also suggested a topic for a special issue which received a good number of submissions and will be published later this year. Mara has taken over now from Jack and has been supported by Elle Hughes who contributed to the proof-reading of this current issue.

Next to proof-readers, we want to acknowledge our peer-reviewers. Over the years, many reviewers dedicated their expertise, time and efforts to assess the quality of the submitted papers. Without them the journal simply would not have been a peer-reviewed academic journal. A very warm thanks to all who have contributed to the success of the journal. Further, we would like to mention the IT team at UWTSD. As the Journal is officially located on a UWTSD server, they monitor the Journal's platform and dealt with several technical hiccups over the years. A special thank you also to the Alister Hardy Trust who supported the development of the Journal and continues to support it.

In 2025, we will publish two issues, a special issue on AI and religious experience that will come out in the autumn, and the current issue with which we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Journal.

Introducing you to the contents of this Anniversary issue, we invited the speakers of the 2024-conference to submit their papers as articles, and we are grateful for the contributions by *Zsuzsanna Szugyiczki* and *Richard Vroom*. Their articles reflect on the Alister Hardy database of religious and spiritual experiences and highlight the significance of the archive. *Szugyiczki's* article explores characteristics of mystical experiences through the Alister Hardy database, while *Vroom's* paper examines the psychological typology of religious experiences by applying them to the accounts of the Alister Hardy database. Both authors are members of the Alister Hardy Trust, working respectively in Hungary (*Szugyiczki*) and the Netherlands (*Vroom*).

We also welcome our first extended book review by *Jeff Astley* and a review of an article from the previous issue (Volume 10.No.1) by *Alan Murdie* which both reflect on the field of the study of religious experience.

A range of topics and geographical location is presented with the other four articles which were submitted to the Journal.

Firstly, *Manuela Palmeirim* of the University of Minho, Portugal writes about parapsychism. Her paper examines the striking similarities between written descriptions of psychic experiences in the Western world and collective discourses on spirits, ghosts, zombies, doubles, sorcery and the invisible.

Further, *Makhabbad Maltabarova* of the Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany discusses the concept of religious experience applied to Sufism. The article questions the exclusiveness of the Western concept of religious experience and argues that the Sufi understanding of religious experience which is deeply rooted in Islamic doctrinal and practical foundations contributes to the field of religious experience.

Also, *Jennifer Uzzell* of Durham University writes about the experiences of Druids during the Covid-19 pandemic. Her discussion of Digital Druidry shows how technology brought people into Druidry but has also its limitations.

And finally, the joint paper by *Andrew Dean* at Sunderland University, and *Anna Waldstein* and *Raj Puri*, both at the University of Kent, looks at ayahuasca churches in Europe and

show how neo-European ayahuasca church members negotiate supernatural 'fact' and 'fiction' outside of traditional religious, psychological, and philosophical knowledge.

This current issue is with eight papers one of the largest issues so far (apart from some special issues). It reflects the strength of the Journal and the growing interest in researching religious and spiritual experiences. A good sign for the future of the study of religious experiences.