

Science and Spirituality – *scio*

My parents both had a strong faith. Where and when I grew up (Edinburgh, in the 1930s & '40s) this was expressed usually by going to church, teaching Sunday school and perhaps being a church 'elder'. As a college student I tried the evangelical Christian path, but was later attracted by the esoteric traditions, spending some years in Gurdjieff/Ouspensky groups, then seeking more mystical experiences, eventually finding my more appropriate home with the transpersonal psychological view of life.

Being of an experimental and curious nature, I often wondered why we are here on Earth — what is the purpose of our existence? My mother's gift was an explicit belief in the spiritual nature of life, and I soon developed a wish to try to reconcile spiritual yearning with knowledge of the world — scientific enquiry. This was to be the focus of my book publishing career and of the books I have written.

Theoretical science is sterile, and belief without experience is unreliable. Jung, when asked if he believed in God, replied, "I don't believe — I know". ('*Scio*' means 'I know'). Knowledge (science) can be a useful tool to help us to learn from experience.

Religion has always played an important role in human society. However, a change is taking place today as more people want to have a personal connection with the sacred, without rituals and doctrines getting in the way. Perhaps this is why church attendance has fallen, although they still fill at Christmas, Easter and times of national crisis. Many, of whom I am one, also feel that the churches still cling to an anthropomorphic idea of God, a concept which has helped fuel many wars and conflicts.

You may have a scientific education and yet espouse the idea of a transcendent presence behind the intricate and beautiful laws which seem to govern evolution and the holistic inter-connections of all life. It seems sensible to limit the term 'religion' to the institutional and doctrinal structures of belief and use 'spirituality' to describe our personal experience of the sacred.

Indigenous societies also believed very much in the gods, but in a less anthropomorphic way. Their deities were usually associated with natural phenomena and with the physical environment. Their focus was more spiritual than religious.

In *The Story of Water* you will find this observation of the spiritual in Nature expressed in discerning natural laws (see [Water's Lessons](#)), and in the exploration of the holistic nature of life and evolution ('everything is inter-dependent'). The Earth is our home, our 'mother', while Nature I see as imbued with the energy of 'The-All-That-Is'. Our inspiration originates in the Cosmos, transmitted to us, I propose, through the water medium, while we are subject to natural laws.

Over the years, because a mystical predisposition, I have developed a personal focus that in the language of transpersonal psychology is called 'the higher self'. I have a very real sense of my ordinary self being overlit by another part of my being which is detached from the cares and confusion of ordinary life, an aspect which seems somehow to be connected with a universal spiritual reality more in touch with the ineffable.

I have a personal relationship with my 'higher self'. It became clear about 40 years ago when it persuaded me (against my better judgement) to launch the Turnstone Press in London. That experience was singular and dramatic. My sense now is of an avuncular figure to whom I can sometimes turn as a touchstone of objectivity and wisdom, or who might be the source of my intuitive thoughts and insight.

I don't interpret this as 'speaking with God', for it must be hubris to believe that such a transcendental prime principle behind the laws of the Universe has any care for individual humans.

This kind of inner spiritual relationship is very personal, and many people must have their own version of it (see [The Spiritual Path](#)). It certainly brings a sense of meaning and purpose to life, and melts away any fear of dying.

Most spiritual traditions speak of the Divine spark in every person, tree and rock. Many of us feel there is a part of us that is sacred. We might all benefit from cultivating this gift.