

EXPLORATIONS



Phone: 410-366-1851
 Fax: 410-243-7062
www.listeninghearts.org
<http://blog.listeninghearts.org>



Board of Trustees

Patricia Brown
 Barbara Cates
 Mike Croghan
 Alice Dorrance
 Suzanne Farnham
 Joseph P. Gill
 The Rev. Timothy Grayson
 Patricia McLean
 Frances Sullinger



Founder

Suzanne Farnham

Office Manager

Laura McConnell



Inside this Issue

God As An Electrical Grid
 Suzanne Farnham

Electric
 Mike Croghan

*Our Divine Connection
 to All Creation*
 Frances Sullinger

**God As An Electrical Grid Suzanne Farnham, Founder
 Baltimore, MD**

Two science-based television programs I watched roughly a year apart have combined with elements of my spiritual life to influence the way I experience God. Here is a meditation that springs from my memory of the two documentaries, weaving in information from other sources and my own thoughts, feelings, and interpretive reflections.

One of the programs is “The Unconscious,” whose starting point is the instant before time existed, when there was only a minuscule dot of super-condensed creative energy. This extremely hot dense energy exploded, spewing forth an all-powerful electric current. After roughly a hundred million years, stars began to burst forth from this electricity. Elements that were emitted from the stars gave birth to planets. On some planets conditions permitted particles of organic matter to come alive as single cells of life.

On earth these living cells became plant and animal life, ever so slowly becoming more complex, ultimately evolving into human beings.

And all these forms of life have consciousness. For instance, the Venus fly trap has hairlike structures that pick up signals from prey hovering nearby. Botanists have verified that trees communicate with each other. Certain plants respond in different ways to varied types of sound that come from the voice of the same person.

As the narrator of “The Unconscious” relates the movement of this electrical energy through all that is or ever has been created over the stretch of billions of years, the path of the energy is traced visually as a colored line. Near the end of the program the line is frozen in place, appearing as an intricate web that connects the entire history of the cosmos. The narrator then states that the unconscious is God.

This program provides a scientific basis for what psychologist Carl Jung referred to as the collective unconscious, which encompasses the entire history of mankind and influences all people at a subliminal level—in a variety of ways, some positive and some negative. We are able to access the collective unconscious to our benefit through meditative exploration to draw lessons from the veiled experience of countless generations.

(Continued)

Jung's insight parallels the cosmic spirituality of contemporary theologians of a contemplative bent who have a grasp of astrophysics and see in it the connectedness and unity of all creation. They notice the common elements that bind together the major religious traditions of the world and encourage interfaith cooperation based on common bonds.

The other program is a PBS NOVA episode, "The Senses." Everything we experience in life enters our body through contact with our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or skin—or some combination of them. You may smell the smoke of a fire; you may see its flames. You may hear it roar or crackle. You may feel its soothing warmth. Possibly it severely burns you, or it may burn down your neighbor's house. Every sensation contains emotional impulses and overtones associated with the specific experience. For example, if a fire severely burns you, the sensations transmit the trauma of pain and personal injury. But, if the house next door is burning down, the sensations arouse horror along with fear that the fire might spread to your house. The senses operate as a team to create a full memory of all that we experience day by day throughout our lives.

Every sensation travels as electrical current from its entry point in the body to the brain, which integrates the contributing sensations and encapsulates the experience, then electronically files it in our body as unconscious. Our entire life experience is present within us whether we consciously remember it or not.

Jung taught that raising the unconscious to consciousness is the path to wholeness, a process he called individuation. He advocated writing down our dreams and pondering the symbolism of the people, places, objects, and activity in each dream as a means of drawing insight from the unconscious. This can be thought of as casting light on the darkness within.

The science and psychology of the unconscious conform with what contemplatives through the ages have known intuitively or discovered through practice. Set aside time to become relaxed and during this time seek out silence. Think nothing; feel nothing; request nothing; simply "be" at the still point deep within. In such stillness, God will be informing us, reforming us, perhaps transforming us—often pointing the way ahead.

During the program on the senses, as the narrator explains how the sensations travel as electrical current through the body, the routes these sensations follow are traced on screen as a green line. Near the end of the episode this green line is frozen in place, appearing as an intricate web that looks remarkably similar to the web of the collective unconscious on the other program.

For the past forty years or so, Jung's concept of the collective unconscious has resonated with me. But I never could comprehend how the collective unconscious feeds into the personal unconscious. The moment I saw that the collective web and the personal web looked so much alike, things suddenly clicked. When the two webs of electricity are touching each other, they transmit their content back and forth. This suggests that at the moment of our birth the collective web makes contact with our personal web and the two remain in contact throughout our life on earth, during which time every personal web is flowing into the collective web while the collective web is updating every personal web moment by moment.

Perceiving spiritual energy as electrical current has opened me up to God's power in a fresh way. A better understanding of the science that underlies contemplative life is invigorating my relationship with God.

(Continued)

Discovering how the universal unconscious connects with my personal unconscious is strengthening my life in God. I now try to plant my full self firmly in my body, with an awareness that, as my nervous system fills me with electricity, God is actively present throughout my entire body. It is as if my consciousness extends into my unconscious.

For me, God now seems like the power plant, the transformer, the wires, and the fiber-optic cable that instantly connect me with everything everywhere—past, present, and future. Amen!

Suzanne Farnham, an Executive Program Associate, is the founder of Listening Hearts Ministries, coauthor of the Listening Hearts series of books, the original architect of the Listening Hearts programs, and serves on the Board of Trustees. She has been leading programs from coast to coast for more than thirty years.

Electric

Beginning small but mighty
As a singularity: pure, tiny power
Crackling with potential
Our story is set in motion

A big bang, then the energy spreads
Careening—forming a brand new universe
Permeated, fully composed of nothing
But the electricity of Creation

Expanding, evolving, becoming
Stars and planets and galaxies
Until the day the cosmos
Takes on a brand new form

Beginning small but mighty
In your mother's womb: pure, tiny power
Sparkling with promise
Your story begins to move

A blessed birth, then the energy grows
Careening though a home made new again
Every room, like each cell in your body
Electric with the Spirit of your Creator

Growing, learning, becoming
Each moment more fully yourself
Until the day you sense the divine electricity
And know deeply that you are home

— Mike Croghan, August 2022

Mike Croghan is a software engineer and poet and a trustee of Listening Hearts Ministries. He is a cradle Episcopalian who crawled out of the cradle early, went on some adventures (including three years as a practicing Tibetan Buddhist and a long sojourn with the "Emerging Church") and is now once again active in his Episcopal church, the Church of the Holy Comforter in Vienna, VA.

LISTENING HEARTS MINISTRIES
MEMORIAL EPISCOPAL CHURCH
1407 BOLTON STREET
BALTIMORE, MD 21217-4202

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Baltimore, MD
Permit no. 4315

MISSION STATEMENT

Listening Hearts Ministries provides a range of programs, publications, and services that teach people the practice of spiritual discernment through prayerful listening in supportive communities.

***Science without religion is lame.
Religion without science is blind.***
— ***Albert Einstein***

Our Divine Connection to All Creation

**Frances Sullinger
Centreville, VA**

In his recent book *Sacred Earth, Sacred Soul*, Celtic theologian John Philip Newell speaks of our divine connection to all creation—the earth, the heavens, animals. God inhabits all, he explains. God is in everything, flowing through it, uniting it all.

What is unique about the Celtic tradition is that it cannot be reduced to a set of doctrines or beliefs. Rather, at its core is the conviction that we need to keep listening to what our soul already knows from the circumstances of our personal lives as well as matters universal. When we are aware that both the earth and human beings are sacred, it changes the way we treat the earth and its life-forms.

Newell goes on to quote contemporary Scottish poet Kenneth White: “It is not just being aware of this flow; it is about knowing the flow and letting go to the ‘glow-flow’ that courses through us and through the veins of the universe.” Also, in White’s words, meditation can move us “into the light /that is not the sun /into the waters /that are not the sea.”

Newell concludes by commending “a sharpened scientific understanding of the single flow of life that courses through the body of the universe.”

Frances is one of two Executive Program Associates for Listening Hearts and is also a Trustee. A retired Foreign Service Officer, she lives in Virginia near her daughter and grandchildren.