



## R. D. LAING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

### What Is Spiritual?

**Zoom Weekend Symposium, July 31 – August 2, 2020**  
*(in lieu of the originally planned July 2020 Workshop at Esalen, Big Sur)*



**Friday, July 31**

**6:00 – 7:00 pm**

**Nita Gage**

***Welcome, Let's Get Acquainted!***

*We will spend this initial, breaking-in meeting to introduce ourselves to each other and give you an idea of what our weekend together will be like. We will begin with introducing the three principal faculty and organizers of our Laing Workshop to you, then our invited guests who will be sharing some of their expertise with you, and finally a chance for everyone attending this special week to introduce yourselves and what you are hoping to gain from this experience.*

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## Saturday, August 1

**10:00-10:45 am**

**Rebecca Greenslade** (joining us from United Kingdom)

(moderated by **Michael Guy Thompson, PhD**)

***Spiritual Transformations: Philosophy As a Way of Life***

*Rebecca will consider Pierre Hadot's and Michel Foucault's contemporary revival of Hellenistic philosophy and its application to life as an embodied practice, arguing for a type of spirituality that is both ethical and pragmatic.*

**10:45-11:30 am**

**Sanford Rosenberg, PhD**

(moderated by **Nita Gage**)

***Embodied Spirituality***

*In this predominantly experiential exercise, Sandy will explore Taiji, Yiquandao (Taoist mindful practices), and the way of the Tao as a way of introducing us to Taoist qigong practice.*

**11:30-12:30**

**discussions, hanging out**

**12:30-4:00**

**Lunch Break & Rest Time. Go for a nice walk, do some yoga . . . relax and refresh yourself.**



**4:00-4:45 pm**

**Rinat Tal, MD**

**(moderated by Nita Gage)**

***Spirituality and Psychiatry***

*Rinat will call on her clinical experience to explore how spirituality is essential to healing in the practice of both psychiatry and psychotherapy.*

**4:45-5:30 pm**

**Douglas Kirsner, PhD** *(joining us from Australia)*

**(moderated by Fritjof Capra)**

***Laing on Spirituality***

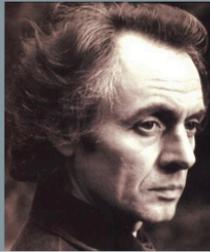
*Doug will share his painstaking research into Laing's voluminous publications, interviews, public lectures, and private seminars on his varied and ever evolving thoughts about the nature of spirituality in relation to the human condition, including Laing's personal relationship with spiritual practices.*

**5:30-6:30**

**discussions, hanging out**

**End of our Saturday session. See you tomorrow!**

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# R.D. Laing

## IN THE 21ST CENTURY

### Sunday, August 2

**10:00-10:45 am**

**Fritjof Capra, PhD**  
(moderated by Nita Gage)

***Life and the Human Spirit***

*Fritjof will show how spirituality can be understood within the systemic conception of life that is now emerging in the forefront of science. He will also explore the spirituality of Laing from this systemic perspective.*

**10:45-11:30 am**

**Michael Guy Thompson, PhD**  
(moderated by Nita Gage)

***Loss of Spirit: Brokenheartedness***

*Continuing with his meditation of the phenomenon of falling in love presented at an earlier symposium, Michael will explore what happens when the person with whom one falls in love abandons the relationship, and why it is so painful. He will allude to the spiritual dimension of unrequited love, a favorite theme of Laing's in his research into the relation between love and madness.*

**11:30-12:30**

**discussions, hanging out**

**12:30-4:00**

**Lunch Break & Rest Time. Go for a nice walk, do some yoga . . . relax and refresh yourself.**

**4:00-5:00 pm**

**Edie Irwin and Chuck Knapp**  
(in conversation with Michael Guy Thompson)

***Meetings With Remarkable Minds: R.D. Laing and Chögyam Trungpa***

*In this three-way exercise Michael will conduct an interview with both Edie and Chuck, exploring their respective personal relationships with Laing and Trungpa, who were close friends, and how they impacted Edie's and Chuck's spiritual development.*

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**SPECIAL EVENING FILM EVENT**  
**TUESDAY, JULY 21 • 8:00 – 10:00 PM**

**CRAZYWISE**  
*How R.D. Laing Situated Love in Authenticity*  
(followed by a discussion with Phil Borges, Michael Guy Thompson, Fritjof Capra, Nita Gage, Douglas Kirsner)

*An award-winning documentary featuring Phil Borges' exploration of radically different responses to extreme states by both Indigenous and Western cultures.*

**5:00 – 5:45 pm**

**Phil Borges**  
(moderated by Fritjof Capra, PhD)

***Discussion of the film "CRAZYWISE"***

*Join award-winning documentary filmmaker Phil Borges in a discussion of his movie, "Crazywise," which explores radically differing responses to extreme states in both indigenous and western cultures. (NOTE: This film will be made available to all registrants to watch at your leisure.)*

**6:00-7:00 pm**

**Michael Guy Thompson, PhD, Fritjof Capra, PhD, Nita Gage**  
***Closing Comments and Discussion, Break-out groups***

**THAT'S ALL FOLKS! WE HOPE YOU HAD A WONDERFUL TIME.**



**SPECIAL THANKS TO ELEN INSTITUTE & FREE ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
For more information and inquiries, contact Michael Guy Thompson, PhD: [michaelguythompson@mac.com](mailto:michaelguythompson@mac.com)

## List of Presenters

**Phil Borges** graduated from University of California Medical Center as a Regents Scholar in 1969, and was honored with their prestigious University of California Medal in 2004. Phil has been documenting indigenous and tribal cultures for nearly three decades. His work is exhibited in museums and galleries worldwide and his award-winning books include *Tibetan Portrait*; *Enduring Spirit*; *Women Empowered* and *Tibet: Culture on the Edge*.

**Fritjof Capra, PhD**, is a physicist and systems theorist, is a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, CA. He serves on the faculty of the Amana-Key executive education program in Sao Paulo, Brazil, is a Fellow of Schumacher College (U.K.), and serves on the Council of Earth Charter International. Dr. Capra is the author of several international bestsellers, including *The Tao of Physics* (1975), *The Web of Life* (1996), and *The Science of Leonardo* (2007). He is coauthor, with Pier Luigi Luisi, of the multidisciplinary textbook, *The Systems View of Life* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). His new online course ([www.capracourse.net](http://www.capracourse.net)) is based on his textbook. He lives in Berkeley, CA.

**Nita Gage, DSPS**, trained with R.D. Laing and his associates at the Philadelphia Association from 1974-1980. She left London and returned to America in 1980 and pursued postgraduate education in psychology and psycho spiritual studies. She trained and studied with shamanic teachers and specializes in integrative psycho spiritual healing. Nita is co-founder of the NeuroImaginal™ Institute, [www.neuroimaginalinstitute.com](http://www.neuroimaginalinstitute.com); Director of Healer Within Retreats, [www.healerwithinretreats.com](http://www.healerwithinretreats.com), teaching medical and addiction professionals NeuroImaginal Practices for health and well-being. She is the author (with Linda Star Wolf) of *Soul Whispering: The Art of Awakening Shamanic Consciousness*, and lives in Vallejo, California.

**Rebecca Esho Greenslade** is a psychotherapist and writer based in London. She currently works in private practice and as a training and research supervisor at The Minster Centre. She is Founder and Director of Gaia Therapy Project, a community-based psychotherapy practice at Hackney City Farm in East London. She is currently undertaking doctoral research with the Dept. of Psychological Services at Birkbeck University and is a Zen practitioner.

**Eddie Irwin** co-editor of Akong Tulku Rinpoche's *Taming the Tiger* (Rider) and is the author of *Healing Relaxation* (Rider); both are available online. Eddie studied with R. D. Laing in India and London in the 1970s and since 1980 has worked under the guidance of Akong Tulku Rinpoche. She is currently a member of the Tara Rokpa Therapy Training faculty and practices psychotherapy in Edinburgh, Scotland.

**Douglas Kirsner, PhD**, holds a Chair in Philosophy and Psychoanalytic Studies at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. He is the author of *The Schizoid World of Jean-Paul Sartre and R. D. Laing* (2003), and *Unfree Associations: Inside Psychoanalytic Institutes* (2009). He lived in one of the post-Kingsley Hall, Philadelphia Association households during the 1970s and has retained a special research interest in Laing's work. His 1980 interview with Laing has recently been published in *The Psychoanalytic Review* (April 2013). He lives in Melbourne, Australia.

**Chuck Knapp** a student of Chogyam Trungpa and graduate of Naropa University, worked closely with Ed Podvoll, founder of Windhorse, for many years. He was a founding member and Director of Friendship House, a residential treatment home for people suffering extreme mental states, and co-founded Windhorse Community Services in Boulder, Colorado, where he has served as a Co-Director, and is currently in charge of marketing.

**Sanford Rosenberg, PhD**, is President of Media Research Associates, and has thirty-five years of experience in Media Psychology. He is a clinician, executive coach, educator, and consultant on media projects including movies, games, and the web, applying the methods of dream psychology and personal mythology to media. Dr. Rosenberg specializes in qualitative knowledge-based research and clinical applications, examining the relationship between language, story, structure, symbol, image, emotion, and experience.

**Rinat Tal, MD** is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist in private practice in Los Angeles. Her work focuses on minimizing medication management with clients with various conditions, including extreme states, incorporating a variety of influences that focus on the transformative aspects of the client-practitioner relationship. She has an abiding interest in alternatives to conventional psychiatry.

**Michael Guy Thompson, PhD**, received his psychoanalytic training from R. D. Laing and associates at the Philadelphia Association in London, and served as the organization's administrator from 1973–1980. He is Personal and Supervising Analyst and Faculty Member, Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California, San Francisco, and has been on the faculty of numerous graduate programs. He is the author of more than 100 journal articles, book chapters, reviews, and five books, *The Death of Desire: A Study in Psychopathology* (1985), *The Truth About Freud's Technique* (1994), *The Ethic of Honesty* (2004), *The Legacy of R. D. Laing: An Appraisal of His Contemporary Relevance* (2015), and most recently, *The Death of Desire: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (2016), an extensively revised and expanded edition of the original, published by Routledge. Michael is founder and director of Gnosis Retreat Center, a refuge for people in crisis, modeled on his work with R. D. Laing in London, and is principal organizer of these Laing Esalen workshops. His current project is a book about *The Heart of the Matter: On the Trials and Tribulations of Love*.

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**NOW PLEASE TURN TO OUR CONTINUING MONTHLY ZOOM SESSIONS FOR THE REMAINING PRESENTATIONS FROM OUR CANCELLED ESALEN WORKSHOP**



## R. D. LAING IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

### What Is Spiritual?

Follow-Up Monthly Zoom Sessions on the First Saturday of  
September, October, November, & December, 2020

*(All four sessions are included in the registration fee for the initial weekend symposium)*

**September 5, 3:00 – 5:00 pm**

(Moderator: Fritjof Capra)

**Will Hall & Michael Cornwall: Who Decides What Is Spiritual?**

Will and Michael will explore Laing's non-pathologizing and compassionate care for people in extreme states, including his use of subtle ecologies.

**Andrew Turkington: Skepticism and Spirituality**

Andy Turkington will explore how the skeptic philosophical tradition, which aims at ridding ourselves of dogmatic beliefs, may bring us to a more profound relationship with the meaning and mysteries of life.

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**October 3, 3:00 – 5:00 pm**

(Moderator: Nita Gage)

**Scott Von, OMD, PhD: Integral Psychiatry and Spiritual Healing**

Spirit is the highest level of Being: the Greek Gnostic Pneuma that encompasses Psyche and Physis. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition there are three types of illness: Physical, Psychological, and Karmic. Scott Von will approach healing from the perspective of the Karmic act of transformation.

**Astrea Ribeiro: *Turning On and Off the Life of the Spirit***

Astrea Ribeiro, a psychoanalyst in Brazil, will share some of the meetings she conducted in Brazil with someone diagnosed schizophrenic. Their meetings occurred in a variety of public locations on the streets of Sao Paolo.

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**November 7, 3:00 – 5:00 pm**

**(Moderators: Michael Guy Thompson and Nita Gage)**

**James Norwood and Connor Tindall: *Gnosis and Psychosis***

James Norwood and Connor Tindall, both graduate students at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, will address topics close to their hearts that have derived from their involvement with the Gnosis Retreat Center in recent years.

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**December 5, 3:00 – 5:00 pm**

**(Moderator: Fritjof Capra)**

**Fritjof Capra: *Video Interview with Fritjof Capra about Stanislav Grof***

*(followed by discussion with Michael Guy Thompson and Nita Gage)*

We will view together a short video interview with Fritjof Capra where he was asked about his long association with Stanislav Grof and his assessment of Grof's legacy. This will be followed by a roundtable discussion with Michael Guy Thompson and Nita Gage, both of whom enjoyed their own contacts with either Grof or his work. All three will share their impressions of who Grof is and the sometimes controversial aspects of his relationship with spirituality.



## List of Presenters

**Michael Cornwall, PhD**, has had lived experience of extreme states and served at the medication-free madness sanctuary I-Ward. He did doctoral research on John Weir Perry's Diabasis House. He is an Esalen group leader and editor at the Journal of Humanistic Psychology for volumes on extreme states. He is the Director of SPAC! (Stop the Psychiatric Abuse of Children). Michael is a prolific blogger on Madinamerica.com and sees clients and peers in private practice.

**Will Hall, MA, Dipl.PW**, works as a therapist, teacher and community development organizer, including Freedom Center, Portland Hearing Voices, The Icarus Project, Madness Radio, the *Harm Reduction Guide to Coming off Psychiatric Drugs* (translated into 10 languages), Valley Free Radio, 2 year certification in Open Dialogue with Mary Olson, Jaakko Seikkula and colleagues, more than 12 years of support group facilitation, and a private practice with individuals and families. He is also a meditator and yoga practitioner.

**James Norwood**, is a graduate of the California Institute for Integral Studies (San Francisco), in the PsyD program in Clinical Psychology. James has been studying the treatment of extreme states with **Gnosis Retreat Center** since its founding, and is committed to its mission to provide residential respite for those in crisis.

**Astrea Issler Ribeiro**, is a psychoanalyst in Sao Paulo, Brazil and in addition to a private Practice she conducts spontaneous outdoor sessions with street people. She is also an artist and philosopher.

**Connor Tindall**, is a doctoral candidate at the California Institute for Integral Studies (San Francisco), in the PsyD program in Clinical Psychology. Connor has been studying the treatment of extreme states with Gnosis Retreat Center since its founding, and is committed to its mission to provide residential respite for those in crisis.

**Andrew Turkington, RN, LMFT**, is a psychotherapist in Oakland and an Associate Professor of Psychiatric Nursing at Unitek College, Fremont, California. He trained as a psychiatric nurse in the United Kingdom and as a psychotherapist with Michael Guy Thompson and Associates at Free Association, Inc., San Francisco. His interests include skepticism, phenomenology, and Tai Chi.

**Scott Von, OMD PhD**, is a physician, psychoanalyst, philosopher, poet, and artist. He is Director of the New Clinic for Integral Medicine & Psychiatry ([newclinic.org](http://newclinic.org)) and Director of Analytica psychoanalytic institute ([analytica.org](http://analytica.org)), both based in New York and Los Angeles. He completed his Doctor of Medicine specializing in Neuropsychiatry at ACTCM-Shanghai University and his PhD in Psychoanalysis at LSE-University of London, and served as a professor and supervisor at NYU, CUNY, CIIS, and Pacific College. He is author of the four-volume book and multi-modal artwork *Autopoesis* which he has exhibited and performed internationally, and author of the clinical books *Schizoanalysis: Chaos & Complexity in Clinical Practice* and *Orgonomy: Integral Medicine & Psychiatry*. ([drscottvon.com](http://drscottvon.com))