



BESHARA

The Beshara Trust

www.beshara.org

Newsletter and Annual Report

September 2013

The Beshara Lecture 2012–13

Entitled *Human Being / Being Human: Awareness, ascension and the attaining of true happiness*, this was delivered by Stephen Hirtenstein at the Westminster Quaker meeting house in London in December and again in Edinburgh as part of the Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace Festival in March. An adapted version was given to the students on the 6 month intensive course at the Beshara School at Chisholme House. [Listen to this lecture.](#)

The talk drew on the writings of such great spiritual masters as Ibn 'Arabi and Rumi, to investigate the meanings of human completion and happiness. It took its original inspiration from research Stephen has been carrying out for a new book, provisionally entitled *The Alchemy of Human Happiness*. The subject matter has turned out to be of great topical interest, following shortly after the publication of the first ever World Happiness Report in 2012. This theme is being further developed in the Edinburgh Conference on *Happiness, Health and Wellbeing* in October (see below).

The Beshara Lecture 2013–14

The speaker will be Jane Carroll. She is working on the fascinating theme of atheism, agnosticism and belief, all as aspects of a single understanding of reality. Jane will be giving the lecture in both London and Edinburgh in February, with the exact dates to be confirmed.

Seminars and study across the UK

London (November 2012 to now)

Seminars

The Saturday afternoon seminars at the October Gallery, Holborn continued, under the theme 'Spiritual Practice in the Midst of Life':

Nov 2012: *The Significance of Sentiment*, with David Hornsby

April 2013: *The Wisdom of Solomon*, with Carolyn and John Markson-Brown

May 2013: *The Poetry of Uftade*, with Michael Cohen

June 2013: *The Poetry of Hallaj*, with Stephen Hirtenstein

The next two seminars are:

Saturday 12th Oct 2013:

Geometry – Sacred Art and Symbolic Language, with Tom Bree

Saturday 23rd Nov 2013:

The Inevitable Conflict: Religion vs Spirituality, with Avi Abadi

We are planning a new programme, with the aim of broadening the subject matter. The events are open to everyone and need no previous familiarity with the material. They are kept as informal as possible and lively participation is encouraged.

Study groups

We intend to start a group that will focus on some chapters from the new translation of the *Fusus al Hikam* (Gemstones of Wisdom) at the Quaker Meeting House, Westminster, initially on Thursday evenings, 7.15–9pm approximately. Dates: 14 Nov, 28 Nov, 5 Dec, 12 Dec, and 19 Dec. There will be a charge for room hire, although this can be waived for those in financial need.

Contact: london@beshara.org or Michael Cohen on 020 8300 7928.

We also plan to run the new 7-week 'Discovering Unity' course, probably in early 2014. This course has been developed by the Beshara School at Chisholme.

Bristol

In response to the successful series of seminars in London over the past few years Sarah Malone saw an opportunity to do something similar in Bristol. The forthcoming program has been developed with the help and support of Peter Yiangou and Michael Cohen.

Rumi in the present: is Rumi a benchmark for contemporary spirituality?
This was held on 28 September, led by Peter Yiangou, with 20 committed participants.

Saturday, 19 October 2013:

Know yourself: an introduction to Ibn 'Arabi's thought, with Cecilia Twinch.

Saturday, 9 November 2013:

Ibn 'Arabi on human happiness, with Jane Clark.

Saturday, 30 November 2013:

The Vision of Rumi's Masnavi: seeing and knowing, with Alan Williams.

Edinburgh

Report from Lyndon Antle (Shamsuddin)

For many years Edinburgh was without the public presence of Beshara. For some years back in the early 1970s that presence was held by the Edinburgh Beshara Centre at the Salisbury Centre, but after a few years, with a change of Trustees, it was decided that the Salisbury Centre would be uncoupled from Beshara and go a different way.

Apart from an occasional course down through the intervening decades, the voice of Beshara was largely absent from the city. But a few years ago all this began to change when the Beshara Trust arranged for the annual Beshara Lecture to be given for the first time in Edinburgh, in February 2011, after it had been delivered in London in late 2010. That one decision has brought Beshara back into the life of a city rich in spiritual traditions ancient and modern.

That first Beshara Lecture was followed by others, all progressively better attended once the public had become accustomed to the excellence and quality of topic and speaker.

The Trust having set the precedent, the Beshara School followed up with another public talk and a first study course at the Salisbury Centre in the autumn of last year, which course was followed by another in the spring of this year, with a third scheduled for the autumn of this year; all again at the Salisbury Centre. With the Salisbury Centre having been rededicated last year once again to the Unity of Being, it feels most appropriate that it can offer a place for the Beshara education in that Unity. As a trustee of the Salisbury Centre, I take great pleasure in the knowledge that we and Beshara are once again working in fellowship.

Seminars

Last autumn two seminars exploring the connections between psychotherapy and mysticism were held at the Friends Meeting House. Twenty people attended the workshops, led by Lyndon Antle (mysticism) and Dot Clark (psychotherapy). Each introduced their workshop with a short presentation representative of the ways of the mystic and the psychotherapist.

Following her seminar on 'Compassion', much appreciated by those who attended, Patricia Price was invited to lead a Mindfulness Meditation day in Berwick, organised by Kathy Tiernan.

Berwick

Kathy and Michael Tiernan hosted two successful seminars in May and June 2012 held by Jane Clark and Cecilia Twinch. Further events are under consideration.

Oxford

The Trust much appreciates the way in which people look for opportunities to bring to attention the ideas of Beshara. Azize Stirling, for example, when renting a pop-up shop in Oxford High Street, offered a room for Beshara to display literature and books related to the education and an opportunity for people to browse and ask questions.

Happiness, Health and Well-being

Talk/Forum & Day Conference

On 11 and 12 October this year the Beshara Trust will be organising a conference, at The Sanctuary, George IV Bridge in Edinburgh, with [EICSP](#) (Edinburgh International Centre for Spirituality and Peace) entitled 'Happiness, Health and Well-being'. The subject matter takes up the theme of the first ever World Happiness Report published last year by the Earth Institute. This follows from the UN General Assembly's suggestion to its member states that they should in future give more attention to this subject of happiness in their public policy making. The Report and the Scottish Happiness Index will provide the context for the event.

Our conference will start on Friday evening with a talk/forum event where a keynote speaker and three panellists will introduce the topic and start the dialogue. The Saturday will look at happiness, health and well-being from the perspectives of spirituality, psychotherapy and education. The event will also include cultural and artistic expressions of the same.

This is our first experience of working in partnership with another organisation on such a venture. We welcome the learning opportunity this provides. We are grateful to Grace Connor for the very striking flyer she has designed for us for the printed version.

Treasurer's Financial Report (1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013)

Income

Donations and Gift Aid	£7,154
Donations from events	£685
Total income	£7,839

Outgoings

Grant to MIAS for 2012 symposium	£625
Grants to Chisholme Institute:	
Redesign of Beshara website	£800
Course development (inc. pilot study in Edinburgh)	£500
*Events: venue hire and speakers' expenses	£1719
Domain names and emailing costs	£396
Conference fees	£140
Directors' expenses (travel and meetings)	£227
Professional fees (accountant and companies house)	£373
Office – postage	£8
Total outgoings	£4788

Surplus funds for year	£3051
Surplus reserves brought forward at 1 April 2012	£5353
Total reserves at 31 March 2013	£8404

* Events in London (6), Edinburgh (3), Oxford (1) and Berwick (3)
(see reports above for more details)

The Angela Culme-Seymour Fund

This was set up after Angela's death with the blessing of her family to encourage new writing and translations. The first grant from this fund has been given to the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, of which she was the Honorary President. It will provide the \$1000 prize for the 'Young Writers Award 2013', for an essay on the teachings of Ibn 'Arabi.

Website

The launch of the new Beshara website has given the Trust direct access to editing its own pages on the site. The Trust's [landing page](#) takes a little finding at present via the main menu: About Beshara / Organization), but we're hopeful the navigation will be simplified as the site settles in.

We want the Trust's pages on the website to be clear, succinct, informative, and as up to date as we can keep them. The main page explains the Trust's primary functions, and from there you can follow links to information about the Trustees and aspects of the Trust's history and work.

There is a new page ([And do you know about...](#)) that provides summaries, and links to more details, of events that the Trust is supporting either directly or behind the scenes. While much, perhaps all, of this information is also available elsewhere on the Beshara website it is not always easy to find, so this is a good place to come for a quick overview.

If you haven't already seen them we highly recommend the [talk](#) and [article](#) written by Charles Verey about Dom Sylvester. Charles was a long-term friend of the Dom.

The Beshara Trust Archive

Report from Lyndon Antle

Dear friends, progress in the matter of the Trust archive has been delayed somewhat by the degree of attention and effort that had been

demanding by one's temporary commitment to the rededication of the Salisbury Centre back to the Unity of Being. That piece of work being now accomplished, one is able to rededicate one's efforts back to the task in hand of the Trust's archives.

I have now retired as a trustee of the Salisbury Centre, which has freed me up to work again on the archive, a task I also relish. I trust that I shall have more and better news of progress for the next newsletter.

Trademark

The Beshara Trust, in partnership with the Chisholme Institute, has secured a UK trademark for the name Beshara for publications, educational activities and design services relating to 'a spiritual and philosophical enquiry based on an understanding of the unity of existence and self knowledge in relation to this'. This will provide some protection regarding the use of the name Beshara in these fields, which is a fundamental responsibility of the Trust.

Trustees

The current Trustees are Janet Bowers, Michael Cohen, Julia Dry, Daniel Hirtenstein, Jenny Martin, Elizabeth Roberts (Chairman), Michael Tiernan and Gill Williams.

Lyndon Antle's period as a co-opted Trustee finished in February. We are grateful to him for having the inspiration and insight to see the value of the Archive for all of us who are concerned with Beshara. Although no longer a Trustee he remains close to the Trust in continuing this work.

In the past year we have been pleased to welcome Daniel Hirtenstein and Jenny Martin to the Trust. Daniel brings experience of publicity, communications, IT and website skills from his work with *Cornucopia Magazine*. Jenny has invaluable experience as Trustee, and Chair, of a number of charitable trusts, as well as many years working in management.