



Spirituality, Wellbeing and Risks

Symposium Programme

22nd - 23rd June, 2023

Deakin Downtown and Online

Spirituality and Wellbeing (SWELL) Research Network

Contemplative Studies Centre, University of Melbourne

Centre for the Study of Religion and Society, University of Notre Dame

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands and waterways on which Deakin University does business. We pay our deep respect to the Ancestors and Elders of Wadawurrung Country, Eastern Maar Country and Wurundjeri Country where Deakin University's physical campuses are located. We acknowledge all First Nations Peoples who contribute to our learning communities.

Spirituality and Wellbeing (SWELL) Research Network

The Spirituality and Wellbeing (Swell) Research Network arises from the Australian Research Association funded Discovery Project on Australian Spirituality: Wellness, Wellbeing and Risks (2023-2025). It is the first nationwide study of spirituality in Australia, investigating First Nations, religious, and holistic spirituality, their contributions to wellbeing, and their possible risks.

Chief Investigators: Anna Halafoff, Tyson Yunkaporta, Cristina Rocha and Andrew Singleton

Partner Investigators: Lori Beaman (University of Ottawa), Paul Bramadat (University of Victoria), Mar Griera (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

Research Fellows: Rosie Clare Shorter, Ruth Fitzpatrick and Samantha Hauw (Deakin University)

Thursday 22nd June, Online and University of Melbourne

Time	Speakers	Location	Chair
Online Panel 1 9am – 11.15am AEST 7pm EDT (Wed 21st June) 8pm ART (Wed 21st June)	Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country - Anna Halafoff Nancy Ammerman , Boston University, USA <i>Approaching Wellbeing and Risk through a Lived Religious Practice Perspective</i> Verónica Giménez Béliveau , University of Buenos Aires, Argentina <i>Conservative sensibilities in Latin American Catholicism: modern society risks and traditional discourses for well-being</i> Géraldine Mossière , Université de Montréal, Canada <i>Global Spiritual Coaching, Local Legal Regulation: A Discussion Based on a Comparative Perspective</i>	<i>Online</i> Zoom Meeting ID: 857 6226 0239 Password: 93370349	<i>Lori Beaman</i> <i>University of Ottawa</i>
LUNCH BREAK			
Panel Discussion: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Spirituality, Wellness, Wellbeing and Risks 2pm – 5pm AEST	Andrew Singleton , Deakin University, Australia Jessamy Gleeson , Deakin University Paul Bramadat , University of Victoria, Canada Julieta Galante , University of Melbourne, Australia	Arts West North Wing, room 253 University of Melbourne	<i>Cullan Joyce,</i> <i>The University of Melbourne</i>
DINNER BREAK			
Online Panel 2 7:00 – 9.15pm AEST 10:00am BST 11:00am CEST	Linda Woodhead , Kings College, London <i>Is Abuse as Much a Problem for Spirituality as for Religion?</i> David Newheiser , Australian Catholic University <i>Secular Art and Spirituality: Historicizing the Question</i> Anna Fedele , Philosophical-Theological College Brixen, Italy <i>Religion, Spirituality and Environmental Sustainability in South Tyrol (Italy)</i> François Gauthier , Université de Fribourg, Switzerland, and Fellow at the Institut d'études avancées de Nantes, France <i>Spirituality and Wellbeing as a Global Phenomenon</i>	<i>Online</i> Zoom Meeting ID: 817 1765 8336 Password: 45920161	<i>Cristina Rocha,</i> <i>Western Sydney University</i>

Friday 23rd June, Hybrid/Deakin Downtown, Level 12, Tower 2, 727 Collins Street

<p>Hybrid Panel 1</p> <p>9:00 – 11:10am AEST</p> <p>4:00 – 6:15pm PDT</p> <p>7pm EDT (Thurs 22nd June)</p>	<p>Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country - Andrew Singleton</p> <p>Paul Bramadat, University of Victoria, Canada <i>At the Edge and Off the Edge: Reverential Naturalism and the Unmoored Mind</i></p> <p>Jessica Pratezina, University of Victoria, Canada <i>Disciples by Default: Children in New Religious Movements</i></p> <p>Galen Watts, KU Leuven, Belgium <i>What Kind of Spirituality Do We Want?</i></p> <p>Rosemary Hancock, University of Notre Dame, Australia <i>Missing in Action: Spirituality and Explaining Movements for Social Change</i></p>	<p><i>Deakin Downtown & Online</i></p> <p>Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3833 5868</p> <p>Password: 61289021</p>	<p><i>Andrew Singleton, Deakin University</i></p>
<p>11.10– 11.20</p>	<p>MORNING TEA</p>		
<p>Hybrid Panel 2</p> <p>11:20 – 12:50 AEST</p>	<p>Lyn McCredden, Professor Emerita, Deakin University <i>Well-being and Sacredness in Literature</i></p> <p>Timothy Jones, La Trobe University, Australia <i>Care and/or Quackery: Nonreligious Spirituality in the Conceptualization of the Wellness Industry</i></p> <p>Vivian Gerrand, Deakin University <i>Narratives, Needs and Networks: Mapping Conspiratorial Radicalisation</i></p>	<p><i>Deakin Downtown & Online</i></p> <p>Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3833 5868</p> <p>Password: 61289021</p>	<p><i>Rosie Hancock University of Notre Dame</i></p>
<p>12:50 – 1.20pm</p>	<p>LUNCH</p>		
<p>Hybrid Panel 3</p> <p>1.20 – 3:30pm AEST</p>	<p>Tyson Yunkaporta, Deakin University, Australia <i>Gifts, Gurus and Wrong Story</i></p> <p>David Tacey, La Trobe University, Australia <i>Spirituality and the Post-Secular in Academic Culture: The Case of Jacques Derrida</i></p> <p>Hannah Gould, Anna Halafoff and Ruth Fitzpatrick, University of Melbourne and Deakin University, Australia <i>Dying Buddhist in Australia</i></p> <p>Rafael Cazarin, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain <i>Spirituality and religion in the lives of transgender and gender non-conforming people</i></p>	<p><i>Hybrid - Deakin Downtown & Online</i></p> <p>Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3833 5868</p> <p>Password: 61289021</p>	<p><i>Anna Halafoff, Deakin University</i></p>
<p>3:20 – 3:30</p>	<p>AFTERNOON TEA</p>		
<p>Hybrid Panel 4</p> <p>3:30pm – 5:00pm AEST</p> <p>7 :30am CEST</p>	<p>Melissa O’Shea, Deakin University <i>Yoga and Psychological Practice: Opportunities and Considerations</i></p> <p>Matteo Di Placido and Stefania Palmisano, University of Turin <i>Crisis and Spirituality: How Pragmatism may Help us to Conceptualise Nurses’ Needs for and the Limits of Spiritual Care in Hospital Settings</i></p>	<p><i>Hybrid - Deakin Downtown & Online</i></p> <p>Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3833 5868</p> <p>Password: 61289021</p>	<p><i>Paul Bramadat, The University of Victoria</i></p>
<p>Online Panel 3</p> <p>7:00pm AEST</p> <p>10:00 am BST</p> <p>11:00 am CEST</p>	<p>Irene Becci, University of Lausanne, Switzerland <i>Nature experience as a transcendent shelter from urban risks</i></p> <p>Gabriela Irrazábal, IDEAHL Research Fellow, RMIT Europe and adjoint researcher at CONICET, Argentina</p>	<p>Online</p> <p>Zoom Meeting ID: 834 8162 7855</p> <p>Password: 33478294</p>	<p><i>Mar Griera, Autonomous University of Barcelona</i></p>

	<p><i>Wellbeing, Health, and Beliefs in Argentina: lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic</i> Bettina E. Schmidt, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK</p> <p><i>Wellbeing as never-ending Battle against Evil: When illness and disability become punishment for sin and wrongdoing</i> Emily Pierini, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy</p> <p><i>Trance-formative therapeutic experiences: Mediumship, multi-sensory images, and therapeutic pluralism</i></p>		
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Thursday 22nd June AEST

Online Panel 1: 9am – 11.15am AEST | 7pm EDT (Wed 21st June) | 8pm GMT – 3 (Wed 21st June)

Zoom Meeting ID: 857 6226 0239 | Password: 93370349

Approaching Wellbeing and Risk through a Lived Religious Practice Perspective

This paper will suggest that we can enhance understanding of the mechanisms that tie spirituality to wellbeing or risk by focusing on specific practices and asking a set of analytical questions that derive from the study of ‘lived religion.’ This involves both a sober assessment of the social context and a deep immersion in the multiple dimensions of the lived experience. Assessing the context means attention to the forces of constraint and opportunity that come from the actors’ status and position, the institutional environment, the culture’s religious traditions and expectations, and the reality of state regulation. All of these factors affect the degree to which practices of wellbeing are promoted and the risks of spiritual practice are contained. Understanding the dynamics of risk and wellbeing, however, also requires an

immersion into the experience itself – its embodiment, materiality, emotion, aesthetics, moral frame, and narrative trajectory – including the way the spiritual dimension is experienced and understood. The case of vaccine hesitancy will provide a suggestive example of such an analysis.

Nancy T. Ammerman joined Boston University’s School of Theology faculty in 2003 as professor of sociology of religion, having previously taught at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology (1984-95) and at Hartford Seminary’s Hartford Institute for Religion Research (1995-2003). She retired from BU in 2019 but remains active in research, writing, speaking and advising. Her most recent research has focused on everyday lived religion across a wide religious and geographic spectrum, including working with Grace Davie (University of Exeter) to coordinate an international team of scholars to assess “Religions and Social Progress” for the *International Panel on Social Progress*. Her latest book is *Studying Lived Religion: Contexts and Practices* (2021)

Conservative sensibilities in Latin American Catholicism: modern society risks and traditional discourses for well-being

The dynamic between memory and utopia characterizes religious discourse: the imagined past feeds a discourse of memory that projects future scenarios, utopias, and ideas about the Kingdom. Catholicism has

historically been an active producer of diverse and even contrasting imaginaries, which emphasize radically transformative utopias or accentuate the return to well-ordered and idyllic pasts. In this presentation I propose to

analyze conservative sensibilities in Latin American Catholicism. The longing for ancient worlds is a common theme in certain Catholic currents, which describe a golden age of the Church in which the hierarchical order kept the risks of the world at bay and brought tranquillity and well-being to the faithful. In Catholic doctrine, the Church's magisterium enunciates the authorized memory and establishes the tradition. Nevertheless, beyond the institution, tradition is a resource to which different currents of Catholicism appeal to, proposing particular ways of interpreting it. In contemporary Catholicism, recourse to tradition interacts with today's spiritual currents that claim diverse forms of

relationship with the body and the environment. Conservative Catholic sensibilities will be studied here according to three axes: body care, lifestyle, and environmental care. The intersection of these three axes will allow us to understand the identification of risks and violence by contemporary conservative Catholic sensibilities and the discourses on well-being.

Verónica Giménez Béliveau is Full Professor at the University of Buenos Aires and the director of the Program Society, Culture and Religion at the CONICET/ CEIL, Argentina. Her research focuses on Catholic social and religious dynamics, the characteristics of the beliefs in contemporary Latin America, and the constitution of identities and movements of religious groups.

Global Spiritual Coaching, Local Legal Regulation: A Discussion Based on a Comparative Perspective

The explosion of the market of well-being has given rise to new actors often called “spiritual coaches.” While the latter include a wide range of profiles and spiritual inspiration, they usually claim a holistic perspective on the body, health, and care that draws on a vision of spirituality sometimes referred to as “secular”. Inasmuch as they revive the specter of the guru and abusive religious authorities in local imagination, their activities are more or less strictly framed by local legal regulations that stem from the historical and social forces that shape each country as well the definitions of religion, spirituality and health they rely on. In this communication, I first

compare how spiritual coaching and holistic practices are regulated in British Columbia and Quebec, two Canadian provinces that differ in terms differ in terms of cultural substrates, relationship to mainstream religion and healthcare organization. Based on exploratory fieldwork in both provinces, we discuss how these two legal and cultural frameworks might impact the market of spiritual coaching and holistic practices by differentiating various types of holistic practices and spiritual coaching and the way they situate themselves in relationship to the conventional medical system.

Geraldine Mossiere is an anthropologist and associate professor at the Université de Montréal's Institute of Religious Studies. Her more than fifty professional publications address contemporary religiosities including religious diversity in secular societies, conversion practices and the growing trend toward spirituality discourse and practices

(see *Converties à l'islam. Parcours de femmes au Québec et en France*, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2013; *New spiritualities and the cultures of well-being*, Springer, 2022). She now works on the healing dimension of spiritualities, including spiritualities in public institutions, mind-body practices as well as spiritual coaching.

Online Panel 2: 7pm AEST | 10:00 am BST / GMT + 1 | 11:00 am GMT +2

Zoom Meeting ID: 817 1765 8336 | Password: 45920161

Is Abuse as Much a Problem for Spirituality as for Religion?

Abuse has been exposed as a serious problem in many religious institutions; this paper asks whether it is equally a problem for spirituality. In the absence of quantitative data that can directly address that question, I draw on other evidence to consider aspects of religion and spirituality that can be used for abusive purposes. Here, abuse means harm inflicted by someone who has some form of power in relation to the victim (often with a sexual dimension), and spirituality is characterised by loose group boundaries, low levels of external control, and an emphasis on the authority of personal experience. As well

as addressing the question, I problematise it by drawing attention to the way in which abuse usually occurs at the intersection of a number of different vulnerabilities relating not only to religiosity but also family, school and/or workplace.

Linda Woodhead is F.D. Maurice Chair and Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at King's College London. She researches religion, spirituality, and values in post-Christian societies. Her most recent books are *That Was the Church That Was: How the Church of England Lost the English People* (with Andrew Brown, 2016), *Gen Z, Explained* (with Katz, Ogilvie, Shaw 2021) and *Unknowing God: Towards a Post-Abusive Theology* (with Peter Harvey, 2022).

Religion, Spirituality and Environmental Sustainability in South Tyrol (Italy)

In this exploratory paper, I present the findings of ongoing research on religion, spirituality and environmental sustainability in the alpine province of South Tyrol (Italy), where the presence of Catholicism is strong. Referring to ethnographic data gathered

through interviews with environmental activists, I will analyze to what extent these activists see (Catholic) religion and/or spirituality as an ally or an enemy in their efforts to advocate environmental sustainability. Referring to previous research

about the religion/spirituality dichotomy (Fedele and Knibbe 2013, 2020), we will see whether this differentiation also applies to the case of South Tyrol and discover its entanglements with environmental discourses. In particular, I want to understand if and how religious / spiritual practices are helping activists to cope with the current scenario of melting glaciers, decreased snowfall and dryness in the Dolomite mountains (Unesco World Heritage) and the risks that climate changes imply for their

health but also for the economic well-being of the local population that is highly dependent on ski tourism.

Anna Fedele is currently a Senior Researcher at the Philosophical-Theological College of Brixen (Italy). Her research focuses on lived religion, spirituality, gender and corporeality with a particular interest in ritual creativity and pilgrimage. She is the co-coordinator of the Routledge Series *Gendering the Study of Religion in the Social Sciences* and the author of the award-winning book *Looking for Mary Magdalene: Alternative Pilgrimage and Ritual Creativity at Catholic Shrines in France*. With Kim Knibbe she has co-edited *Gender and Power in Contemporary Spirituality* (2013) and *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves?* (2020).

Spirituality and Wellbeing as a Global Phenomenon

Alternative or holistic spiritualities are almost always discussed within a Western framework, as a Western phenomenon. This leads to a certain ethnocentrism in our analyses. In this talk, I want to make three arguments. First, New Age related spiritualities constitute a global phenomenon, with corresponding avatars across the Muslim world, China, and Eastern Europe among other places. Second, wellbeing-focused spiritualities are examples of the lifestylisation of religion that are paradigmatically opposed to conservative reactions on the Pentecostal model, namely

with respect to the insecurities and risk in today's marketized, global societies. Finally, looking at spiritualities from the outside in enables us to clearly see how they constitute a dominant type of religion today rather than some kind of "quasi-religious" or "secular" whatnot.

François Gauthier is Professor of Religious Studies at the Social sciences Department of the Université de Fribourg in Switzerland, and presently Fellow at the Institut d'études avancées de Nantes, in France. He is the author of *Religion, Modernity, Globalisation. Nation-State to Market* (Routledge 2020) and co-editor of the *Routledge International Handbook on Religion in Global Society*.

Secular Art and Spirituality: Historicizing the Question

This presentation draws on a Templeton-funded project that my ACU colleague Lexi Eikelboom and I lead. Broadly speaking, the project revisits the relation between secular

art and spirituality by considering the relation between art practice and religious ritual. In this presentation, I'll aim to historicize the questions at stake by examining the

emergence of “art” and “religion” as distinct categories in the early modern period. As scholars of religion such as Talal Asad have shown, the concept of “religion” (as we understand it) was invented in order to justify the emergence of the newly “secular” state. There is reason to think that “art” in the modern sense emerged around the same time in order to designate a sphere of culture distinct from the realms of religion and commerce. My hunch is that tracing this history helps to clarify that the established

lines of tension in contemporary debates are not inevitable, and it suggests that it may be possible to identify new possibilities for spirituality today.

David Newheiser is a Senior Research Fellow in the Institute for Religion and Critical Inquiry at Australian Catholic University and an affiliate of the Gender and Women’s History Research Centre. His research explores the role of religious traditions in debates over ethics, politics, and culture. He is the author of *Hope in a Secular Age* (2019) and the editor of *The Varieties of Atheism* (2023). His current book project considers the link between premodern miracle traditions and democratic imagination.

Hybrid Panel 1: 9:00 – 11:15am AEST | 4:00 – 6:00pm PDT (Thurs 22nd June) | 7pm EDT (Thurs 22nd June)

Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3833 5868 | Password: 61289021

At the Edge and Off the Edge: Reverential Naturalism and the Unmoored Mind

Individuals and communities in the Pacific Northwest region of North America have arguably moved into a new era when it comes to how one might conceptualize or talk about one's religious or spiritual inclinations. While conventional categories in the study of religion – such as religious, irreligious, spiritual, minority religious, agnostic, etc. – remain useful for analysis, what I call “reverential naturalism” may be a better description for the common default orientation to the natural (and spiritual) world we observe here. In this presentation I provide an account of this form of naturalism, based on *Religion at the Edge* (UBC Press 2022), a large interdisciplinary project I led on the religious, spiritual, and irreligious landscape of the region. It is also interesting to note that in

this region, one sees low levels of loyalty to conventional institutions – religious and otherwise. I will speculate on the connections between the unprecedented freedom that is taken for granted in the Pacific Northwest and the phenomena of vaccine hesitancy and conspiratoriality, the key interests of a previous book project I led (*Public Health in the Age of Anxiety* (University of Toronto Press 2017).

Paul Bramadat is professor at the University of Victoria and director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society. His academic interests include religion and public discourse, public health, and public safety. His most recent co-edited books were *Religion at the Edge: Nature, Spirituality and Secularity in the Pacific Northwest* (UBC 2022), and *Urban Religious Events: Public Spirituality in Contested Spaces* (Bloomsbury 2022). His current research is in postural yoga in contemporary Canada and the United States.

Disciples by Default: Children in New Religious Movements

From a social work perspective, little academic attention has been paid to the experiences of people involved with new or alternative religious movements (NRMs). Across disciplines, there is even less research into the experiences of children in these groups, which

are often called “cults” in the media. Despite this lack of research or interest, many social workers do indeed encounter children from NRMs in the course of their work. Still, there is little scholarly work that addresses wise practices with children living in these

controversial communities, or that provides insight into providing care for young people who have left. Relying on the popular “brainwashed cult member” trope, state interventions in NRM communities position children as having little agency and presumes they are in need of rescuing or curing. This framing does not adequately address the complexity of NRM experiences and assumes that those raised in NRMs primarily view their experiences as harmful. This presentation explores the diverse experiences of children living in or exiting from NRMs and proposes

What Kind of Spirituality Do We Want?

It remains a longstanding criticism of spirituality that its individualism undermines the cultivation of moral commitment and robust community. Yet, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, a quite different critique has been voiced: spirituality is perniciously anti-science. This claim is based on the fact that the anti-vax movement received considerable support from spiritual practitioners, owing to both their scepticism of Western bio-medicine and their attraction to “natural” healing methods—hence the term, “conspirituality.” Of course, these respective criticisms tend not to be voiced by the same critics. Yet it is precisely this fact that warrants attention. For spirituality only became a threat to the scientific establishment when it mustered sufficient commitment and communal feeling to

ways they might receive social care that takes their faiths, cultures, and lived experiences seriously.

Jessica Pratezina is a PhD student in Interdisciplinary Studies (Child and Youth Care; Sociology) at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Her doctoral research uses theories derived from religious conversion to explore the narratives of women who changed their attitudes towards abortion. She is also one of the few academics globally who specializes in children in cults/ new religious movements. She has over a decade of experience as a front-line social service practitioner working with vulnerable families

animate collective action (protesting vaccine mandates), while, to the extent that spirituality remains socially impotent, it loses the power to make trouble for either science or the state. In turn, examining these critiques alongside one another reveals an important, if overlooked, fact about critical debates over the risks that attend spirituality: the *problems* attending spirituality vary depending on the normative conception of spirituality espoused. In this presentation, I explicate this issue, and the profound implications it holds for the study of spirituality.

Galen Watts is an FWO Fellow at the Centre for Sociological Research at KU Leuven (Belgium). Between 2020-2022 he was a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow based jointly at KU Leuven and the University of Toronto. His first book, *The Spiritual Turn: The Religion of the Heart and the Making of Romantic Liberal Modernity*, was published in

2022 by Oxford University Press. He has published articles in venues such as *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *American Journal of Cultural*

Sociology, *Civic Sociology*, *The Sociological Review*, and *Cultural Sociology*.

Missing in Action: Spirituality and Explaining Movements for Social Change

Whilst scholars in religious studies and the sociology of religion are increasingly examining the nature and role of diverse spiritualities in contemporary social and political life, including the relationship between spiritual communities and beliefs, and conspiracy and radical political groups, scholars of social movements lag behind. The field's efforts to understand and explain the causes and mechanisms of social change have at times tried to account for the role of conventional religion in movements for social change (often inadequately) but results from a recent study of the construction religion and

spirituality in mainstream social movement theory suggests diverse spiritualities, including indigenous spiritualities, are rarely considered as drivers of or factors in movements for social change. This paper presents the results of this study, focused on accounts of spirituality in social movement theory.

Dr Rosemary Hancock is a Senior Lecturer in the sociology of religion, Convener of Religion, Culture and Society research focus area, and Assistant Director of the Institute for Ethics and Society at the University of Notre Dame Australia. Her research focuses on religion, social movements, and grassroots politics. She is co-host of the podcast *Uncommon Sense*, and co-editor of the *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion*.

Hybrid Panel 2: 11:30 – 1:00

Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3833 5868 | Password: 6128902

Well-being and Sacredness in Literature

In a purportedly secular nation such as Australia, how are literary artists offering alternative narratives of sacred depth? With illustrations taken from poets Les Murray and Lionel Fogarty, and novelists Patrick White, Helen Garner and Tim Winton, this paper will examine the nature and role of sacredness in their work. It will ask how characters living “half lives” of loneliness and exclusion are

represented in different forms of transformation and well-being through sacred encounter.

Lyn McCredden is Professor Emerita of Literary Studies at Deakin University. Her critical work focusses on the nature of sacred representation in literature, with most recent exemplars including Australian writer Tim Winton (*The Fiction of Tim Winton: Earthed and Sacred*, 2019), and a Cambridge University Press anthology chapter, “Poetry and the Sacred in Australian Literature”, forthcoming.

Care and/or Quackery: Nonreligious Spirituality in the Conceptualization of the Wellness Industry

In the past twenty years, the wellness industry has emerged as a global alternative health framework. Wellness industries make diverse claims about holistic spiritual, care, which are generally nonreligious. They have conflated and co-branded divergent holistic health services, which include both evidence-based and fanciful spiritual health care practices. These have been subject to significant critiques for appropriating colonised people's cultural, spiritual and health practices, as well as operating as a tool of neo-liberal governmentality. The historical process by which these disparate elements

were bound together in the overarching conceptual framework of 'wellness industries' has not yet been examined. Neither has the unresolved tension between fraudulent and genuine spiritual care in wellness industries. This paper seeks to trace a genealogy of wellness industries, analysing the function of nonreligious spirituality in the emergence of the Wellness Industry.

Timothy Jones is an historian of religion, gender and sexuality and is Associate Professor of History at La Trobe University. He leads a major research project investigating LGBTQA+ conversion practices in Australia, and is commencing a new research program into Wellness Industries and nonreligious spiritual care.

Narratives, Needs and Networks: Mapping Conspiratorial Radicalisation

Spiritual and wellness communities, long-time proponents of complementary and alternative healing practices, were not immune to conspiracy thinking before the arrival of COVID-19 (Ward and Voas 2011). The pandemic intensified engagement with conspiracy-oriented (conspiratorial) influences through promotion of the idea that the crisis was an opportunity for awakening, planetary ascension and transformation, in pointed contrast to government public health and biomedical strategies adopted that were represented as a threat to freedom, mental and physical wellbeing. In this paper, I explore the ways in which new age spirituality and

wellness have been mobilised in narratives and networks that appeal to the needs of spiritual and wellness adherents while also constructing polarising in and out-group dynamics that bear similarities to those of religiously inspired or attributed extremist groups. To enhance understanding of how spiritually inspired or attributed forms of radicalisation to conspiracy thinking have increased their reach and influence during the pandemic, I draw on a qualitative digital ethnographic case study of conspiratorial radicalisation as observed through the messaging of popular, trusted alternative health, spiritual and wellness influencer – Dr

Christiane Northrup – and on in-depth interviews with female-identifying wellness adherents to explore these issues.

Dr Vivian Gerrand is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute where she coordinates Stream 2 (Building resilience to social harms including violent extremism) at the Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies. She

currently co-leads the Objects for Everyday Resilience research project and was a chief investigator on the Horizon 2020 Building Resilience to Violent Extremism and Polarisation (2019-21) Project. In 2017-18 she was an Endeavour and a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute, Florence. Vivian is the author of *Possible Spaces of Somali Belonging* (MUP, 2016).

Hybrid Panel 3: 1.30 – 3:30pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3833 5868 | Password: 61289021

Grifts, Gurus and Wrong Story

The intersection of spiritualism and sense-making in heterodox thinking domains, the wellness industry and contrarian activist circles has resulted in the hyper-politicisation and radicalisation of millions of people online in a post-pandemic world. Minorities such as Indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to mytho-poetic disinformation discourses, which have a profound colonising

effect on land-based spiritualities at the interface between Aboriginal and settler communities in Australia.

Tyson Yunkaporta is an Aboriginal scholar, founder of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Lab at Deakin University in Melbourne, and author of *Sand Talk*. His work focuses on applying Indigenous methods of inquiry to resolve complex issues and explore global crises.

Spirituality and the Post-Secular in Academic Culture: The Case of Jacques Derrida

By the end of the nineteenth century, almost every enlightened thinker expected religion to disappear in the twentieth. Today, nobody speaks of an imminent extinction of religions or of the religious (or spirituality) any longer. What was seen as common sense forty years ago has been replaced by a new understanding: that the religious will endure, and the yearning for a spiritual life is on the

rise. It is clear that our universities are stuck in a time-warp. They are still predicated on the secularisation thesis that leading edge sociology has rejected. The idea of the death of God and the end of religion still governs most university courses. They are wrong but there is too much personal and institutional investment in these ideas to change track. Jean-Luc Marion puts the crisis in these terms:

he says that the whole academic polemic about the death of God 'is now outdated'. We are 'passing from the death of God to the death of the death of God'. 'We are no longer in an atheist society but a post-atheist one'. 'That's the new situation', he says, and 'all serious philosophy agrees on that'. I will explore the puzzling case of Jacques Derrida, and in particular his uproarious reception at Monash University in 1999 as a case that brings into focus the professional and personal risks as we witness the 'return of the religious'.

Dying Differently, Dying 'Buddhist' in Australia

For many Australians facing the end of their lives, spirituality is an important source of meaning-making, coming to rival the mainstream position once held by Christianity within Australian society and our death care system. Buddhism, Buddhist-inspired, or 'buddhist' teachings and practices are particularly influential in this arena. Buddhists are increasingly positioned as "death experts" within Western popular culture (Garces-Foley 2003). This includes mindfulness tools for dealing with terminal diagnoses, compassion cultivation training, and incense and chanting at otherwise secular funerals.

In this paper, we describe the core values and practices comprising buddhist dying and death care in contemporary Australia. We draw data gathered through survey,

Professor Emeritus David Tacey is a writer and public intellectual who works across the fields of spirituality studies, health and wellbeing, depth psychology and philosophy. He is the author of sixteen books in these fields, of which *The Postsecular Sacred* (2020) is the most recent. His books have been published internationally and translated into seven languages. David grew up in Alice Springs, central Australia, where he became involved in Aboriginal cultures and has maintained a life-long interest in Aboriginal cultures and spiritualities. He is Professor Emeritus of Humanities at La Trobe University, Melbourne.

interviews, and visual analysis of deathcare service websites, to suggest that buddhist death is attractive because of its non-dogmatic and non-proselytising approach, its teachings on impermanence, and its honest confrontation with the realities of suffering and dying. Buddhist practices further tend to promote rich sensory experience and contact with nature at the end-of-life. Our analysis of this emerging 'deathstyle' leads us to identify deficiencies within Australia's deathcare system. We argue that new forms of spiritual care are required in order to meet the needs of growing number of religiously unaffiliated, spiritual or indeed, staunchly secular dying people, their families, and communities.

Dr Hannah Gould is a cultural anthropologist studying religion, materiality, death and discarding, with a regional focus in North-East Asia and

Australia. Holding degrees from the University of Melbourne and Oxford University, she is currently the Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellow in Arts within the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne for the project “Mobile Mortality: Transnational Futures of Deathcare in the Asia Pacific.” Gould currently serves as the President of the Australian Death Studies Society, is the author of *When Death Falls Apart* (University of Chicago Press, 2023), and co-editor of *Aromas of Asia* (Penn State University Press, 2023).

Dr Anna Halafoff is an Associate Professor in Sociology and leader of the Spirituality and Wellbeing (Swell) Research Network at Deakin University. She is the author of *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions*, co-editor (with Marian DeSouza) of *Re-Enchanting Education and Spiritual Wellbeing*, and co-author (with Andrew Singleton, Mary Lou

Rasmussen, and Gary Bouma) of *Freedoms, Faiths and Futures: Teenage Australians on Religion, Sexuality and Diversity*.

Ruth Fitzpatrick is a sociologist specialising in contemporary iterations and influences on/of religion, spirituality and contemplative traditions. She has served as a Research Fellow on ARC and other grants relating to religion, spirituality and contemplative traditions and their relationship to Gen Zers, death and dying, conspiracy movements, religious diversity, and education. Her earlier research explored how cultural narratives shape what Australian Buddhists conceive Buddhist social engagement to be. She is currently interested in how contemplative practices and traditions are (mis)/applied in response to contemporary challenges and crises; and how spirituality can be used as a means of healing or harming.

Spirituality and religion in the lives of transgender and gender non-conforming people

Scholars of queer and transgender studies as well as trans-rights movements and activists stress that the voices of transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) people are not heard by existing research on health and wellbeing. Such studies tend to overlook the perspective of healthcare professionals and TGNC patients bounded by hospitals and medical treatments, pathologizing their experiences outside clinical environments. Yet, religion and spirituality are some of the least explored dimensions in these studies except for positive psychology research focusing on the correlation between religion or spirituality and wellbeing. This paper examines the ways TGNC people navigate discrimination, trauma, relationships, stereotypes, and happiness along with their religious and spiritual lives.

Based on the life stories of individuals living in Spain, I explore how they negotiate religious, spiritual, and nonreligious beliefs along with gender ambivalences and uncertainties. These experiences evoke intersectional dimensions shaping decisions that affect their health and wellbeing in fields such as family, medical decisions, lifestyle, and migration. In such context, religion/spiritual allegiance or dissidence can be both an extra obstacle and a personal safe space to cope with the challenges faced in the daily lives of transgender and gender nonconforming people.

Rafael Cazarin (PhD) is a sociologist with a background in ethnographic research and applied sociology. Currently, he holds the *Juan de la Cierva* Research Fellowship awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and is based at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. His work examines

scientific and religious discourses around gender and sexuality in Spain. Rafael has been a visiting scholar at Wits University, the University of Oxford, and University of Birmingham. He also collaborated

with development agencies and non-governmental organizations in South Africa, Togo, and the Congo (DRC).

Hybrid Panel 4: 3:45 – 5pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 851 3833 5868 | Password: 61289021

Yoga and Psychological Practice: Opportunities and Considerations

Mindfulness-based practices have been increasingly integrated into psychological approaches, including, for example, Mindfulness based CBT. In contrast, there has been less exploration of the integration of Yoga within psychological treatments. Yoga represents one of the schools of Indian philosophy - a contemplative practice aimed at anchoring awareness and supporting the practitioner to cultivate a unity within self and through this, a unity with the divine - however the practitioner conceives of this. It offers a wholistic approach treating all the layers of the human system. This is done through engagement with a variety of tools that include physical postures (asana), breath practices (pranayama), meditation (dhyanam), mantra (sound) and bhavana (visualisation). There is emerging evidence that yoga may be a more accessible mindfulness practice for people experiencing

distress, and a growing interest in how yoga can be integrated into current models of mental health treatment. Drawing on the current evidence and practice perspectives, this discussion will examine the benefits and ethical considerations of the application of yoga tools in psychological care, including the role of spirituality more broadly in psychological treatment approaches.

Melissa O'Shea (PhD) is an Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology and a trained yoga teacher in the Krishnamacharya tradition (500 TT). She is a devoted yoga practitioner, clinical psychology educator and research academic. She has a strong interest in the use of complementary and alternative practices alongside psychological treatment approaches to improve wellness outcomes and engagement - in particular yoga, through its understanding of the mind and solutions offered to suffering. Melissa has undertaken a pragmatic trial examining the benefits of yoga as an adjunct to CBT for adults suffering from depression and anxiety and conducted private group programs combining Yoga and CBT for mental health.

Crisis and Spirituality: How Pragmatism may Help us to Conceptualise Nurses' Needs for and the Limits of Spiritual Care in Hospital Settings

This presentation introduces a pragmatist theoretical framework tailored to conceptualize nurses' needs for and the limits of spiritual care in hospital settings in the light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Nurses found themselves in the front line of health and social care in the most unprecedented circumstances and have been exposed to increased emotional stress, psychosocial risks and mental-health issues, thus underlining the importance of frameworks and interventions capable to understanding and in turn strengthening their personal and professional strategies of resilience. According to Shilling's (2008) theorization of the body, the pragmatist notion of "habit" (Dewey 1922) coupled with a specific attention to biographical and societal moments of crises that stimulate social actors' creativity and actions oriented to social change, may help to understand and explain innovation and social transformation. Following this framework, and starting from a discussion of the research project *'Religions in the Hospital: Integrating Spirituality and Medicine in Care Practices'* (RESPIRO) (2019-2022) and the educational and training project *'From Cure to Care (FCTC): Digital Competences and Spiritual Assistance in Hospital Healthcare'* (2021-2023), we conceptualize COVID-19 as a moment of crises that fostered nurses' needs to creatively adapt to a new scenario, thus re-shaping their habits (beliefs, experiences,

practices and professional repertoires) also through the provision of spiritual care whose needs and limits have become evident during the pandemic. Here, nurses resemble "wounded story-tellers" (Frank 1995) capable to give meaning to the challenges that their personal and professional identities faced, in the light of the broader context of COVID-19 as a crisis that fostered their change of habits. We conclude emphasizing the substantial lack of thematization of the body in healthcare practices and the paradoxical role of spiritual care interventions as forms of "body work" (Twigg et al. 2011).

Matteo Di Placido is a cultural sociologist (sociology of religion) and currently works as a Post-doctoral Fellow for the University of Turin. Matteo was a Visiting Scholar at the Department of Political Science and the Center for Ideas and Society at the University of California Riverside (UCR) and an Academic Associate at the Cardiff School of Sport and Health Sciences at the Metropolitan University of Cardiff, Wales. His research interests include the processes of transformation, translation and transmission of yoga and Buddhism, the hybridization between the registers of health and salvation, the discursive study and the politics of scholarly knowledge production and social theory.

Stefania Palmisano is Associate Professor in the Sociology of Religion at the University of Turin, Italy, where she teaches the sociology of organization and the sociology of religion. She was Visiting Research Fellow in the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion at Lancaster University and Visiting Research Fellow, Department of Religion, Philosophy and Cultural Heritage at Wolverhampton University.

Nature experience as a transcendent shelter from urban risks

With the worldwide growing attention to the impact of climate change on city life, urban dwellers' social relation to nature is changing profoundly, often taking on a spiritual form. This presentation aims at exploring the ways in which "nature" is experienced and construed as a transcendent entity by urban dwellers by relating some fieldwork explorations in Swiss cities in the frame of questions arising from urban sociology and lived ecospirituality. Be it when parks are used for ecological festivals, roofs are greened through guerilla gardening actions, during climbing or cold-water immersions, or when trees are defended against construction plans aiming to eliminate them, (urban) nature is source of enchantment for a number of urban dwellers. Such practices have gained in number, intensity and meaning with the increasing attention paid to environmental concerns. Considering the

crucial importance of current urbanization, it is essential to understand how city dwellers' worldviews are changing with regard to nature and what this implies in terms of the narrative about the causes and remedies of the current environmental shift. The focus shall be put on understanding how the enchanted visions and practices of urban nature are linked to the concrete environmental issues affecting urban dwellers (waste, air pollution, water, biodiversity, nutrition).

Irene Becci, is professor at the Institute for the Social Scientific Study of Religion, University of Lausanne. She has been researching with a focus on religious diversity and new spiritual practices in particular settings, such as total institutions, urban spaces and ecological activism in Switzerland, Italy, the USA, and Germany. Among other publications on these topics, she has recently co-edited a special Issue of the Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture on "A 'Spiritualization' of Ecology?" (2021).

Wellbeing, Health, and Beliefs in Argentina: lessons learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic

This paper examines the interplay between health and beliefs during the COVID-19 outbreak in Argentina. It employs the Science, Health, and Beliefs survey - a non-probabilistic study with 4547 cases nationwide (2021) - to analyze the health issues faced by survey participants. Results indicate that respondents

experienced at least three health conditions simultaneously during the pandemic, and many were unable to access medical professionals or the healthcare system due to emergency focus and long isolation periods. Consequently, respondents reported using complementary or integrative medicine

practices such as prayer, medicinal plants, and foods for healthcare. Moreover, women's health was disproportionately affected particularly due to the increase in cases of gender-based violence. As a discussion, this paper raises questions about the possibility of reintroducing integrative medicine processes and spiritual care strategies into the biomedical healthcare system, which during the pandemic promoted a care model based on the hegemonic medical model. Additionally, it questions how people who have developed self-care and attention

practices will rely on the biomedical system to address their well-being and the possible impact of this situation in public health (rejection of treatment, technologies and mistrust).

Dr. Gabriela Irrazábal is an adjoint researcher at CONICET, Argentina. Her research area is the intersection between science, religion, and public health. Her recent research positions include appointments as a researcher at CONICET, Argentina since 2018, 2022-2023, visiting researcher at ISOR, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, funded by CONICET, and 2022 IDEAHL Research Fellow at RMIT University Europe.

Wellbeing as never-ending Battle against Evil: When illness and disability become punishment for sin and wrongdoing

Spiritual experiences are usually perceived as enrichment for the sense of wellbeing. But what happens when the experience is negative or when the experience is interpreted as punishment for sin? Focusing on the experience of incorporating spirits, the paper reflects on the risks when spiritual experiences become linked to demons. The paper is based on anthropological research on mediumship practices in Brazil where the practice is widespread though with varied interpretation. While in African-derived religions in Brazil the experience is regarded as enriching the human recipient, making them complete, Neo-Pentecostal churches link the experience to demons that disturb the spiritual order. People achieve wellbeing only by battling against these demons and failure

to achieve a cure is interpreted as sign of an ongoing attachment to demons. This paper begins with presenting wellbeing as living well together, a holistic concept that defines wellbeing as being in relation with other human and other-than-human beings such as spirits, God and the orixas. Based on this understanding, spirituality is important part of wellbeing. The second part of the paper then moves to a discussion of the risks when spiritual experiences become linked to demons and blamed for illness or even disabilities

E. Schmidt DPhil (habil.) is professor in study of religions and anthropology of religion at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK and the director of the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre. Her academic interests include anthropology of religion, diaspora identity,

religious experience, spirituality and wellbeing, with fieldwork conducted in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Peru, New York City, and Brazil. Among her publications are *Spirit and Trance in Brazil: An Anthropology of Religious Experiences* (2016,

Bloomsbury), and *Spirituality and Wellbeing: Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of religious experience and health* (2020, Equinox, with J. Leonardi).

Trance-formative therapeutic experiences: Mediumship, multi-sensory images, and therapeutic pluralism

Spirit mediumship and possession are often conceptualized as being individual psychic phenomena or marginal practices belonging to some distant otherness, or even reduced to some kinds of pathological categories.

However, besides spreading through transnational religions they are increasingly embedded in a growing network of therapeutic practices operating besides the biomedical field. One of such instances is the transnational spread of the Brazilian Christian Spiritualism of the Vale do Amanhecer (Valley of the Dawn) and the development of what mediums describe as 'mediumistic trance'. I will compare the experiences of people with chronic disease and anxiety who learned spirit mediumship across the Atlantic between Brazil, the US, and Europe. The mediums' narratives of their therapeutic itineraries highlight a two-fold movement: through different therapeutic domains; and through

the phenomenology of mediumistic trance, which is more sensorial, imaginal, and affective. I therefore propose the notion of 'trance-formative therapeutic experiences' to understand how mediumistic trance is learned for therapeutic purposes fostering a transformation.

Emily Pierini is Assistant Professor in Anthropology and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at Sapienza University of Rome, Italy. She has researched spirit mediumship in Brazil, Europe, and the US, embodied knowledge and learning, body and self, spirituality and biomedicine, and transnational healing. She is the author the book *Jaguars of the Dawn: Spirit Mediumship in the Brazilian Vale do Amanhecer* (Berghahn, 2020) and she has co-edited the volume *Other Worlds, Other Bodies: Embodied Epistemologies and Ethnographies of Healing* (Berghahn, 2023). She is also co-coordinator of the HEAL Network for the Ethnography of Healing