

## TOWARDS A MODERN METAPHYSIC

**A weekend of in-depth conversation on the relationship between modern scientific thought and the metaphysics of unity as expounded by Ibn 'Arabi.**

**Including presentations from Colin Tudge and Jane Clark**

**Feb 13 – 14**  
**The Beshara School**  
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**Colin Tudge** was born in London in 1943; educated at Dulwich College, 1954-61; and read zoology at Peterhouse, Cambridge, 1962-65. Ever since then he has earned a living by spasmodic broadcasting and a lot of writing—mainly books these days, but with occasional articles. He has a special interest in natural history in general, evolution and genetics, food and agriculture, and spends a great deal of time on philosophy (especially moral philosophy, the philosophy of science, and the relationship between science and religion).

### The Art of the Insoluble

I was educated in biology, the science of life, and according to the very famous biologist Richard Dawkins, scientists are supposed to be atheists. They are after all committed to a view of life that is above all “rational”; and the more rational you are – so Dawkins says – the more you see that religion is nonsense, and evil with it: little to do with truth, but everything to do with wishful thinking, and the desire to rule by fear and superstition. Yet some of the world’s greatest scientists were, or are, deeply religious. Many follow or followed orthodox theologies, while others are or were religious in their outlook although, strangely, they often declared their atheism. I am inclined to quote Francis Bacon: “A little philosophy inclineth a man’s mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s minds about to religion”. I cannot claim “depth”. But the more I know the more I take religion seriously and am now convinced that religion properly construed is vital both to understanding and to sociality. The crudeness of the modern scientist-atheists is deeply damaging: not exactly the root of all evil, as Dawkins claims is true of religion, but a very strong candidate: brutal, authoritarian, and often remarkably stupid.

I want to discuss what religion really *is* and is not; and what science really is, and is not. The agenda of religion, properly defined, is to embrace everything within one coherent narrative: what the universe is really like; how it is proper to behave within it; and how we can find out the truth and know what is true. At the heart of this endeavour is the concept of transcendence – the feeling that there is more at work in the universe behind the scenes that we can see and measure. The ambitions of science, properly construed, are far more limited – which is why it seems to succeed as well as it does: scientists ask only those questions they think they can answer (“The art of the soluble”, as Peter Medawar put the matter). The insights that science provides are impressive and necessary but as the basis for a philosophy of life they are dangerously inadequate.

*The idea of a "unified vision" struck me as being exactly what is required - exactly what has gone missing from modern thinking and politics. But then I thought: what actually do we want from this vision? What is it for?*

**Colin Tudge**

### "He governs the world through itself" Ibn 'Arabi on secondary causation

This presentation will explore the way in which Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysical vision and the understanding of contemporary science can be correlated. The matter of causation is crucial to our understanding of ourselves and of the world, and takes on particular importance in our present global situation. There would seem to be an irreducible divide between the spiritual traditions, which understand that the world is created by, and is dependant upon, a transcendent being, and the sciences, which see the world as self-subsistent, operating independently according to its own in-built laws. Ibn 'Arabi's perspective, based upon the unity of existence, offers a possible context for dialogue between these two points of view because of his acknowledgement – unique within his own tradition – of what he calls ‘secondary causes’ (*al-asbâb*) and the important place he gives them in both his metaphysics and his delineation of the spiritual path. Both these aspects will be addressed in the talk, which will give a basic introduction to the main ideas as a starting point for conversation.



**Jane Clark** (B.Sc (Hons), M. Phil. (Oxon) has been engaged with the works of Ibn 'Arabi for more than 30 years. She studied at the Beshara School and University of Oxford, and is an active member of the Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society, working particularly on the Society's project to create a digital archive of the most important Akbarian manuscripts. Originally trained in science, she has a particular interest in Ibn 'Arabi's metaphysics and their relevance to contemporary art and science; she was the editor of Beshara Magazine, a founder editor of "The Journal of Consciousness Studies", and, with Willis Harman, editor of "The New Metaphysics of Modern Science". She has given many lectures and seminars on Ibn 'Arabi's thought, and works as a teacher in Oxford.

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## Booking Form

Name(s) ..... M/F .....

Address.....

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Phone ..... E-mail .....

Age .....

# TOWARDS A MODERN METAPHYSIC

**13 – 14 February 2010** with **COLIN TUDGE** and **JANE CLARK**

**Reception at 6pm on Friday 12<sup>th</sup>. Seminar concludes 5 pm Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>**

Seminar attendance including full board for Friday and Saturday  
nights at Chisholme House

**£150**  
(concessions) **£120**

Seminar attendance only (including lunch and dinner)

**£90**  
(conc) **£70**

THE ART OF THE INSOLUBLE Single Lecture attendance only

**£9**

**All prices include a 10% donation to the Bursary Fund**

Bursaries are available subject to application to the secretary

I enclose a cheque for..... payable to The Chisholme Institute Ltd.  
Credit/debit card payments can be made by contacting the secretary (address above)

Special requirements/additional information (e.g. allergies etc) Please specify below.

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