



books in brief

David Lorimer

Note: many of these books are now available in downloadable electronic form

SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Sensation

by **Thalma Lobel**

Icon Books Ltd 2014, 245 pp., £12.99, p/b.

This is a fascinating book about the unconscious influences of our senses on our behaviour - the theory of embodied cognition. To be more precise, the studies described in the book show that our physical sensations activate abstract concepts and consequently influence our behaviours, emotions and thoughts. In an early example, the author explains how being offered a hot cup of coffee by people buying her flat makes her more amenable to accept a lower price. A particular experiment describes how the temperature of a therapeutic pad influenced participants to choose a reward for themselves or a gift for friends. If the pad was warm, they tended to be more generous. Each chapter investigates a particular experience of sensation, for instance texture, weight, height and power, sweetness and the implications of red – both in terms of performance and its association with sexual attractiveness. Women on a red background – or wearing a red dress - were deemed more attractive than those with other colours. Even the weight of the clipboard influenced people's judgements. Reading the research reported in this book makes one much more aware of subtle physical influences on our judgements and behaviour.

Mechanisms in World and Mind

by **Bernd Lindemann**

Imprint Academic 2014, 151 pp., £9.95, p/b.

This book by a professor of physiology seeks to justify reductive physicalism as an explanatory hypothesis from the angle of perspective dualism, which distinguishes the mental view from the neuronal world invisible to the first person. Two central concepts are the mind as a bundle of experienced mental processes generating the first person perspective, and the self as a separation by perspective. The author claims that reductive physicalism, although it cannot be proven, has not been falsified and that mental functions must be causally powerless. Nowhere does he consider the importance of emergence or the evidence that reductive physicalism has been falsified by various parapsychological phenomena that he neither mentions nor investigates. His position involves the denial of top-down causation in spite of internal impressions to the contrary and the evidence from meditation research and the placebo effect. He regards the whole as entirely dependent upon the parts and qualia as task-oriented.

Moreover, only by reduction, he claims, can things be understood. He produces his own model of consciousness based on distinctions between proto-consciousness, phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness as a major achievement of evolution, which he explains in a comprehensive table (p. 106). An important concept is the subjective transparency of the neuronal, which hides the neuronal mechanisms that he holds to be responsible for our thinking and actions and which gives rise to the illusory first person perspective. Even if the assertion that humans are more than physics is justifiable, it is in his view compatible with reductive physicalism. The text is rigorously argued and stimulating in this regard despite the serious omissions mentioned above.

Life and Process

by **Spyridon A. Koutroufinis (Ed.)**

Walter DE Gruyter GmbH 2014, 322 pp., €109.95, h/b.

As this volume shows, much of current philosophy of biology is based on the assumptions of classical physics, which look increasingly inadequate in the light of developments in 20th-century science. These are spelt out in the introduction, where the editor explains the difference between current philosophy of biology and biophilosophy, which in this volume draws on the work of Whitehead with process ontology. The editor explains the need for a new approach on the basis of what the current approach is unable to deal with. He then sets out the foundations of Whitehead's metaphysics, including some key terms that need to be understood if one is to get to grips with a new view. As one might expect, the contributions are pretty technical and include teleology, variables in evolution and progressing beyond systems theory.

For the more general reader, the essays by Henry Stapp on the effect of mind upon brain and that by David Griffin on a third way beyond neo-Darwinism and intelligent design are of the greatest interest. Stapp and others question the principle of the causal closure of the physical and connect a more quantum approach with that of Whitehead. Griffin breaks down the arguments and claims of neo-Darwinism to two basic scientific doctrines concerning micro and macro evolution, five metaphysical doctrines including naturalism, uniformitarianism, positivism – materialism, atheism and nominalism; then four derivative scientific doctrines and two religious-moral implications - that the universe is meaningless and amoral. He then discusses Dembski's ID criticisms of neo-Darwinism before advancing his own third way and concluding with a statement of what could properly be taught in schools. His whole discussion brings a great deal of clarity to these important issues.

Why Humans Like To Cry

by **Michael Trimble**

Oxford University Press 2014, 232 pp., £10.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'tragedy, evolution and the brain' this is a fascinating cultural and neurological study about how humans are unique in shedding tears of sorrow, especially in the context of listening to music or attending the theatre (I am just listening to Bach's Christmas Oratorio as I check this). The context of the book is set by Friedrich Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, with its discussion of the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of existence; the latter is associated with the theme of the book, also related to the functioning of the right hemisphere (Iain McGilchrist is quoted in this respect). The main sources of the book are watching and discussing Greek tragedy, listening to music (especially opera) and a lifetime study of neuroscience. The book covers the nature of crying, especially its neuroanatomy and neurophysiology (including the emotions more generally), then how this capacity has arisen in the course of evolution and within the cultural context of tragedy; also more broadly through the development of empathy, the capacity to love and a corresponding greater sense of loss – life, love and death and their expression in the arts.

The Quantum Age

by Brian Clegg

Icon Books Ltd 2014, 282 pp., £14.99, h/b.

As the title suggests, we are now unequivocally living in the quantum age. Even so, it is astonishing to learn that technology based on quantum physics now accounts for 30% of US GDP. This is because quantum physics underpins all our electronic devices as well as lasers, superconductors, MRI scanners and the prospect of magnetic levitating trains. The author takes us on a tour of the history, concepts and applications of quantum physics explaining the key players and episodes in a highly readable fashion. He has a specific chapter on Feynman and quantum electrodynamics as well as chapters on light and non-locality. As I imagine is the case with many other readers, I was unaware of the role of Joseph Swan in developing the light bulb. The work of Brian Josephson is described in some detail with the usual sideswipe about his interest (wide-eyed acceptance!) in the paranormal, described as time-wasting fruitlooper - this just betrays author's own ignorance of the field. Needless to say, laser weapons were developed as a result of quantum technology, which brings one back to Albert Schweitzer's Nobel peace prize address on the need for humans to develop a real sense of common humanity. The last chapter sums up the impact of quantum technologies while acknowledging that it is still just a highly successful theory.

It Started with Copernicus

by Keith Parsons

Prometheus Books 2014, 429 pp., \$19.95, p/b.

This book is an updated and revised version of a book first published in 2006. It is a good introduction to the philosophy of science, and the author makes no apology for adopting a particular viewpoint broadly aligned with scientific realism and therefore taking a sceptical view of post-modernism and other constructivist standpoints. As the title suggests, Copernicus is the starting point for his analysis. He then moves on to questions of rationality and incommensurability, the question of scientific progress, the nature of truth, methods of enquiry, and the relationship between science and philosophy in terms of the limits of science and the naturalising of epistemology and ethics. The final chapter covers science, scientism and being human, with a particular emphasis on the nature of mind - whether this is physical or spiritual. He takes the former view, claiming that what he calls the residue of unexplainable near death experiences can safely be ignored, just as in the case of UFOs. He is, however, quite right to highlight the dangers of confirmation bias, but this applies just as much to people like Michael Shermer who write about this. The final section discusses the nature of being human, citing Alex Rosenberg as a proponent of atheistic naturalism and providing pithy answers to the big questions about the nature of life. Network readers are unlikely to agree with this analysis, but it is well presented.

The Brain Supremacy

by Kathleen Taylor

Oxford University Press 2014, 368 pp., £12.99, p/b.

The title of this book refers to the promise of neuroscience with its capacity to shape us and our self-understanding; this also offers some human beings the power to manipulate human nature mechanically and directly by changing the brain. She sees brain research as promoting an organic approach to consciousness and rejecting any notion of spiritual essence, although these do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive. She argues that the change is already underway in terms of the impact of neuroscience on society, for instance in terms of the law, child development, entertainment and communications. Since new ethical issues arise from these developments, it becomes more important for there to be an informed public to discuss and debate them. It is also clear that these developments - like any new technology - can be

misused. The book ranges widely through themes such as mind reading, designer minds, new scanning technologies, various types of enhancement, neurochemistry and genetics, and even digitised neural experience. Ultimately, the issues raised are ethical and moral and have to do with the continued development of a manipulative mind-set that can be used for both improvement and destruction - balancing what she calls the wisdom of Athene with the gift of Prometheus. This is a thoughtful guide to a rapidly advancing field and its implications.

The Logic of Self-Destruction

by Matthew Blakeway

Meyer Leboeuf 2014, 384 pp., £18.99, h/b.

Many thinkers have dissected what they regard as elements of human irrationality in a quest to understand destructive behaviour. This book takes a different approach by arguing that self-destructive acts are in fact rationally derived from manipulated emotional behaviour based on beliefs. These beliefs distort emotions associated with survival-enhancing actions and are therefore self-destructive - the beliefs themselves seem impervious to contrary evidence. The author builds his case through a series of scenarios, exploring evolutionary psychology and the relationship between language, feelings and behaviour. Beliefs tend to create a self-reinforcing loop, especially beliefs *in* as opposed to beliefs *that*. He covers a wide range of human belief systems, including the fundamentals of capitalism based on generating wealth and enhancing wellbeing. He argues that this system represents a trickle up rather than a trickle down theory, contrary to popular belief. He devotes considerable space to discussing the relationship between happiness as a belief and as an emotional state. The real danger, as we have seen, is the irrefutability of many beliefs associated with destructive patterns of behaviour and the subjective feeling that they are doing the right thing - a sceptical view in an absolute sense. Books like this shed light on the process and can make us more self-aware of our own belief patterns and their implications.

Quantumology

by Kathy Ratcliffe (SMN)

Matador 2014, 209 pp., £9.99, p/b.

This book, based on 17 years research, helps bring together quantum science and its implications for our lives through an understanding and application of quantum principles. It gives many explanations of key quantum concepts and how the author sees these as applying to our more familiar reality. Key concepts include black holes, singularity, uncertainty, the nature of observation, oscillation (also waves and particles), hierarchy, time and synchronicity. Parallel with these themes is a practical emphasis derived from her Xia Empowerment Training. At the end of each chapter, there is a reflective exercise based on its contents. The reader becomes aware of the power of choice where every possibility has potential and we have a real capacity to change, for instance moving beyond negative self-speak and destructive patterns - changing our habits. We become more conscious of paradoxes and polarities in life. There is a useful model of our life as creating a tree through every decision, action, word and thought - yet open to new possibilities and patterns of growth. We are prime causal agents in a complex web of cause and effect. Our moods and states oscillate, and we can learn to choose love over fear while becoming more self-aware. There is an interesting chapter on synchronicity and the question of whether there is an orchestrating intelligence behind such patterns, which the author sees as a waveform connecting to the way we live our lives and understand larger frameworks. The style of the book is quite discursive, but it certainly lives up to its billing as a deeper exploration of universal principles in the quantum realm. See www.quantumology.com

MEDICINE/HEALTH

Athritis Reversed

by Dr. Mark Wiley

Tambuli Media 2013, 276 pp., \$19.95, p/b.

I'm not sure why I was sent this book, but it is a very good one for anyone suffering from arthritis. It is based on a holistic understanding of the body and its processes as a result of the author's own experience. The body is always trying to achieve homeostasis, a principle that allopathic medicine finds difficult to understand in simply treating symptoms and advising patients to live with their condition. The three parts explain causes, myths and triggers of arthritis, including the impact of food and stress; the next section explains natural solutions with a wide variety of advice. The third spells out a 30-day arthritis relief action plan to enable patients to take parent initiative. A very useful resource.

The Trauma of Everyday Life

by Dr Mark Epstein

Hay House Publishers 2013, 225 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Continuing his work at the interface of Buddhism and psychotherapy, Mark Epstein analyses the transformational potential of trauma as an indivisible part of life that can be used as a tool for growth and for a deeper understanding of change. The book begins with a reflection on the sudden death of three men and the effect this had on their widows, observing that Buddhist teaching regards trauma or suffering simply as a fact of life: everything is burning. He recounts a striking incident with Ajahn Chah, who looks at a glass beside him, remarking that for him it is already broken (although not yet), hence the preciousness of every minute - an insight that one could also apply to human friendship in the face of the universality of death. Epstein sees the mind's capacity for self-reflection as a key to dealing with trauma, an insight that he uses with his dying father, who has little interest in Buddhism and spirituality and had avoided facing his own mortality. Overall, the book sheds light from Buddhism not only on the nature of trauma but on life itself.

Depression, Emotion and the Self

edited by Matthew Ratcliffe and Achim Stephan

Imprint Academic 2014, 303 pp., £19.95, h/b.

This is a technical book of philosophical and interdisciplinary perspectives on the phenomenology of depression. The four parts deal with self and agency, comparative phenomenology, body and culture, phenomenological and neurobiological perspectives. The emphasis is on the qualitative shift the overall structure of experience to a different alien world with implications for self, agency, the body, temporal experience and the sense of being rooted in the world. The papers draw on recent research on the emotions and new developments in the philosophy of psychiatry and will be of particular interest to those trying better to understand the nature of depressive illness.

PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION

From Teilhard to Omega

edited by Ilija Delio

Orbis Books 2014, 263 pp., £19.99, p/b.

Teilhard died 60 years ago next year but his influence has only grown and it is hard to imagine in retrospect how revolutionary his ideas appeared to the Church. The contributors to this volume subtitled 'Co-Creating an Unfinished Universe' write about theology and evolution (the longest section), a new philosophical vision, spirituality and ethics, and a new vision of science. Each contribution is clearly set out, with a few points to ponder and questions for discussion. The editor takes up Ewart Cousins' phrase of a new axial period as mass communication has enabled a breakthrough in human consciousness around the globe in terms of a wider sense of community and ecological relatedness. He likens Teilhard to a desert father removed from the world in his search for human origins in China and therefore able to ponder deeply the meaning of Christianity and produce a unique body of work that speaks to new generations with a metaphysics of an emerging future rather than a pre-existent hierarchy of being.

His eternal feminine embodies the spiritual power of matter and the Earth with an end-point of manifesting divine love as the new fire - a hyperphysics enabling the emergence of more being - and hence more consciousness and greater freedom - in the process of evolution. This is also the emergence of complexity and interiority. Ursula King writes engagingly about Teilhard's zest for life, translated from the French 'goût de vivre' and implying a commitment, engagement and a general sense of aliveness but also drawing on spiritual energy embracing the powers of growth and life as well as those of diminishment and death.

All is Mind : the Skolimowskian Philosophy of the Participatory Mind

by Vir Singh

Partridge, India, 2014, 286 pp., no price given p/b.

Denise Gurney writes: Exactly what it says in the title, this book is an ode to the participatory philosophy of Henryk Skolimowski. For the reader not familiar with Henryk's work, Professor Singh has done a sterling job of cramming a lifetime of work into one volume and it provides a clear unfolding of the thoughts and ideas behind creating a life of participation. Taking participation a step further and describing how All is Mind and Mind is All, Vir Singh urges us to live in Grace and use our Minds with integrity, lucidity and empathy to create an "out there" that is the same as what's in the mind. A far ranging work by Vir with the only frustration for those of us who have read much of Henryk's work, being the lack of referencing for the many quotes.

Earth's Cosmic Ascendancy

by George E. Moss (SMN)

White Crow Books 2014, 284 pp., £13.99, p/b.

As Ervin Laszlo and Gyorgyi Szabo point out in their introduction, people are gradually opening out to a wider understanding of life involving invisible as well as physical realms and non-physical intelligences. Salumet is one such being, who has been communicating with a group in Kingsclere for more than 20 years. The book covers a wide range of topics about the underlying nature of reality and life, the role of other intelligences in building the pyramids, the pitfalls of prophecy and next steps for human development. The narrative is descriptive, interspersed with direct quotations from communicators, who ostensibly include Catherine the Great, Rudolf Steiner, Mary Queen of Scots and Margaret Beaufort, often with quite revealing details of their life situation and how they felt about it. There is a strong message about the importance of the power of creative thought as well as



love overcoming fear and a more complete understanding of truth gradually emerging. Towards the end, there is discussion of more practical matters like HAARP and chemtrails with both positive and negative intent in the use of technology. This is backed up with descriptions of patents describing this technology in undeniable terms. It is also important to give priority to the inner life and to live from the inside out with an awareness of collaborating with invisible intelligences. The fundamental proposition is that 21st-century science must expand to realise that essential human capacities are in fact external to material space-time. This book is a contribution to the realisation of an expanded understanding of reality.

I Am Here

by **Georgi Y. Johnson**

O Books 2014, 190 pp., £11.99, p/b.

This is a profound book to live and work with over a period of time as one deepens one's spiritual insight into life. The five sections are entitled I Am Here, Consciousness, Awareness, Emptiness and Here Am I, each interwoven with the other. Who am I? What is the meaning of 'am' in I am? What does being here entail? Each of these chapters/aspects is summarised right at the beginning and then expanded on throughout the book. The chapters contain a seed line out of which they grow. Here is a sample of the style: 'Before we were conceived, whether or not we believe in life before birth, there was love. This love was pervading through the plane of divided forms, blending, attracting, and moving male and female, sperm and egg towards collision.' Here again: 'Through the need to care for form and preserve it, we can neglect the existence from which form was born, confusing the manifestation for that which is manifesting.' Now can dissolve as it expands to an eternal dimension behind time. The words in this book are transparent to a deeper mystery for those who can intuit it. Observation of an event is different from awareness of it, its felt sense. Behind all this is stillness and perhaps the potent energy of emptiness. And beyond that is unity. Ultimately, I am here for you. Although dense, there is much food for thought and reflection in these words.

Healing Your Ancestral Patterns

by **David Furlong**

Atlanta Books 2014, 227 pp., £14.99, p/b.

This is an updated edition of a book first published in 1997. It is based partly on research and partly on personal experience and the basis that we need to understand all the factors that have been woven into our lives, whether through inheritance or environment. Accessing ancestral patterns provides a further avenue of exploration for healing that can potentially affect future generations as well. The first part maps the territory historically and cross-culturally, while the second gives practical guidance to healing the family tree. There are a couple of fascinating case histories containing highly evidential items of information and in some cases apparent reincarnation within the same family. The reader learns to construct a 'genogram' of individuals and their patterns, illustrated with the Kennedy and Jung families. Personal awareness is the first stage of change. Various exercises are given to access the Higher Self and gain insight into family patterns. It is important for ancestors to feel acknowledged, understood and forgiven. There may also be a need to balance certain patterns within oneself. In addition, place may perform a significant role. It is also interesting in this context to note the extraordinary healing of near-death experiencer Anita Moorjani, which shows that bodily patterns can be completely transformed through contact with a higher order of existence. The appendix provides a timely update on epigenetics. This is a sound guide to an interesting area of healing.

Leibniz

by **Richard T.W. Arthur**

Polity Press 2014, 231 pp., £16.99, p/b.

At the end of this informative and scholarly work, the author quotes Diderot as saying that 'when one comes to one's senses and compares one's own talents with those of a Leibniz, one is tempted to throw away one's books and go and die peacefully in some forgotten corner.' This book certainly gives a vivid impression of Leibniz's huge range of abilities and accomplishments. There are chapters on logic, language and the encyclopaedia project, natural philosophy and the science of life, mathematical philosophy, the reform of metaphysics, dynamics, the philosophy of space and time, morals and politics. Partly as a result of a visit to England, Leibniz was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society at the age of only 27. He then became the founding president of the Berlin Academy of Sciences.

Natural philosophy embraces a wide range of disciplines and had a much broader meaning than just physics in the 17th century. One can see how Leibniz anticipated self-organisation in his thinking, which also addressed the question of infinite and the mind-body problem. It is interesting to note that his conception of God's action in the world underpins not only his ideas on space and time, but also his theory of justice. He defines this as the charity of the wise and benevolence as the habit of love. Posterity has not been that kind to Leibniz, starting with Voltaire's *Candide* as well as the fallout from his dispute with Newton. However, he has been immensely influential over a wide field, as this book demonstrates.

Schopenhauer – A Very Brief Introduction

Christopher Janaway

Oxford 2014, 160 pp., £7.99, p/b.

I have a shelf of Schopenhauer's work gleaned in various second-hand bookshops – he was a great aphorist and one classic remark was if only when one bought a book one could buy the time to read it in. He would have been overwhelmed by the modern production of books. This very short introduction brings him to life as a combative person and explains the main themes of his work – appearance and representation, the importance of will, his ethics and his pessimism. There is also an assessment of his considerable influence on subsequent thinkers including Wagner, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein. He was also one of the first major thinkers to be influenced by Indian ideas.

Hegel – A Very Brief Introduction

Peter Singer

Oxford 2014, 160 pp., £7.99, p/b.

Hegel was a giant in his day and his philosophy has been hugely influential, especially on Karl Marx. As Peter Singer points out, his prose is impenetrable and it seems, on the accounts of his students, that his delivery was no less so. Singer explains that he has deliberately missed out certain aspects of Hegel's work including aesthetics, philosophy of religion and philosophy of science. He concentrates instead on his philosophy of history, which I have in my library, his writings on freedom, logic and dialectics. His philosophy of history is one of the progress of freedom, which has yet to reach the whole world.

Kierkegaard – A Very Brief Introduction**Patrick Gardiner***Oxford 2014, 144 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

I first read Kierkegaard on an existentialism course at St Andrews University in the 1970s. He had a tortured personal life and allegedly drew out the last of his money the week he died in his 40s in 1855. His vision is intense and his view of Christianity radical. He inherited this intensity and anxiety from his father. He was well read in contemporary philosophy and drew on both Kant and Hegel, formulating a subjective view of truth that had a great influence on subsequent religious thinking in taking Christianity far more seriously than the church as a guide to immediate conduct, in a similar way to Tolstoy at the end of the century. This short book provides a thorough grounding in his philosophy of freedom and the self.

Thomas Merton – Selected Essays**edited by Patrick O'Connell***Orbis Books 2014, 492 pp., \$25.99, p/b.*

Paperback edition of this great selection fully reviewed in December last year.

The Shaman Within**by Claude Poncelet PhD***Sounds True 2014, 275 pp., \$17.95, p/b.*

Claude Poncelet is a physicist specialising in nuclear physics, astrophysics and cosmology, who has also been involved in sustainable development and has taught shamanism for 25 years all over the world. In this excellent book, he brings these disciplines together in a comprehensive account of many dimensions of the subject, based on his own experience of how the principles of shamanism can be adapted to the 21st-century. He brings together scientific and intuitive ways of knowing and a common understanding of interconnectedness in both science and spirituality. He explains the concept of impeccability as the manifestation of authentic being in everything we do in our lives, quoting Coomaraswamy as saying that art is the making of things well, which can also apply to life.

There is a good chapter on the art of dying as a key to the art of living and its fundamental challenge to the ego. We can prepare for death through shamanic practices, as the author illustrates through an initiation process of his own. He sees healing as a form of transformation and explains the nature of shapeshifting into different identities. The second part of the book applies shamanic principles to life, illustrating this with rituals, and to science in terms of a more comprehensive understanding of reality. Towards the end, there is an important chapter on transforming the modern attitude to nature by transcending limited and separative concepts so as to collaborate with other species in restoring the natural environment.

Inside The Cosmic Mind**by Phoebe Wyss (SMN)***Floris Books 2014, 223 pp., £16.99, p/b.*

Some readers will already be familiar with the work of Richard Tarnas on archetypal astrology (*Cosmos and Psyche*) and the follow-up by Keiron le Grice, which helps put astrology on a new and more plausible philosophical basis. A number of key concepts inform the book, especially synchronicity and the Hermetic correspondence between above and below or heaven and earth. This was certainly recognised by the ancients and incorporated into stone circles. The first part explores Phoebe's own journey towards a more comprehensive understanding of astrological principles. She discusses the history of cosmology, divine numbers and their significance – especially 12 – and the significance of archetypes, another concept developed by Jung, who was

himself interested in astrology. It becomes clear that modern scientific ideas emphasising interconnectedness are a much better fit for astrology than classical physics. One should also add the importance of the qualitative dimension, given that modern science places an almost exclusive emphasis on the quantitative, and the importance of geometry.

The second part is an archetypal approach to chart interpretation including horoscope geometry, the elements and signs in the chart, and the themes emerging from a more detailed analysis. This is brought to life with an extensive treatment of the chart of William Blake in the final chapter. She explains his life and work and how a chart can be interpreted archetypally. Blake was a complex and even contradictory figure with a sophisticated understanding of symbols. The conclusion brings the argument together with the hope that an archaic vision of oneness is indeed emerging in our time in which a newly formulated astrology has a significant role to play as part of a top-down understanding of life. Overall, this is a well-argued contribution towards a new understanding of astrology.

Fearless In Tibet**by Matteo Pistono***Hay House Publishers 2014, 347 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

Few readers will have heard of the 19th and early 20th century Tibetan lama Tertson Sogyal, who is the subject of this fascinating and well-written biography, with a foreword by Sogyal Rinpoche, who seems to be one of two reincarnations of this teacher whose lives overlapped in time. As with many mystics, his father had very different ideas about his career, and even enlisted him with a group of bandits in the hope of toughening him up. However, his calling asserts itself strongly and he finds his first important teacher in Nyala Pema Dundul. There is a vivid account of his death and the dissolution his body into light, leaving only hair and fingernails. The conscious death is one where the next birth is directed. Tertson becomes the meditation teacher of the 13th Dalai Lama and his fame gradually spreads throughout Tibet. Special meditation retreats were held to ward off invasion. There is an extraordinary story of Tertson ordering his students to cut a hole in the ice, into which he promptly dives, disappearing for quite some time before reappearing with two treasures in his hands. These stories are much less important than the teachings and meditation practices and the vow to help all beings. Towards the end of the book, there is a moving account of the meeting between Sogyal Rinpoche and his spiritual twin Khenpo Jikme Phuntsok in 1993 where they recognise each other as one at a deep level. This is a work of dedicated and spiritually instructive scholarship.

Humble before the Void**Chris Impey***Templeton Press 2014, 256 pp., \$27.95, h/b.*

This is a very unusual book, with a foreword by the Dalai Lama, about a three-week Science for Monks programme building on his interest in the dialogue between science and Buddhism and educating his monks in the process. He sees the spirit of curiosity and enquiry at the heart of both Buddhism and science, also referring to interdependence and causality. The making of sand mandalas is a striking symbol of impermanence as these can be swept away in an instant. The curriculum is set out in a wheel with the following categories: knowing, space, time, matter, energy, structure, life and meaning – pretty comprehensive. The course begins with an investigation of knowledge and uncertainty, moving through the other topics and arriving finally at meaning. The author finds imaginative ways of explaining complex concepts. At the same time, he relates his own experience with the monks, so far removed from his normal environment (he is also accompanied by his son). Not surprisingly, time slows down and he finds himself becoming more patient. In one amusing teaching incident, he uses the proposition 'a monk

has farted' to explain the entropy involved in this sulphide emission. Going home, he sees his life through new eyes and questions some of the assumptions that he had left with. The book is thoroughly engaging and highly informative.

The Golden Dawn

by Gordon Strong

Axis Mundi Books 2014, 144 pp., £9.99, p/b.

This is the story of the Esoteric Order of the Golden Dawn inaugurated in 1888 more or less dissolving 15 years later through internal politics. The author observes that the question asked of the initiate 'why do you seek?' has only one acceptable answer, 'I seek in order to serve', an adage as true today as ever when it comes to power. The 1890s were an exciting period in esoteric history, and the Golden Dawn proved an important meeting point for many prominent people including AE Waite, WB Yeats and Charles Williams. The central character was McGregor Mathers with his wife Moina, who was the sister of Henri Bergson. Women played an important role at a time of emerging sexual equality. The history of the Order and its many colourful characters are vividly evoked and it is easy to see why it could not last. Members chose their own motto, and Yeats selected 'Demon est Deus Inversus'. There is also a good discussion of the meaning of magic in the Western tradition with its associated history. Sadly, the aim of initiation in producing an incorruptible pure individual is hard to attain but still a worthy aspiration. This is a highly informative account.

How (not) to be Secular

by James K.A. Smith

Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing 2014, 148 pp., £16.00, p/b.

This book provides a guide to Charles Taylor's major but rather inaccessible work, *A Secular Age*. His focus is what the author calls 'a shift in the plausibility conditions that make something believable or unbelievable' - the conditions of belief. Around 1500, it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, while in our own time 'unbelief has become for many the major default option.' It is very helpful to gain a better understanding of the meaning of the word secular in Taylor's work. In classical and mediaeval accounts, it meant temporal, while post-Enlightenment it refers to a non-sectarian, neutral or areligious standpoint. His third sense is where religious belief is understood to be one option among others, and thus contestable, as implied in the quote above about a shift in the conditions of belief. In the Middle Ages, there were cosmological obstacles to unbelief, which were gradually undermined as humanism became more imaginable, partly as a result of new scientific insights. There is an interesting chapter on the transition from Deism to Atheism as the sense arises of living in an immanent and impersonal order - what Taylor calls the immanent frame that leaves no space for or openness to transcendence and represents a 'closed world system' so familiar in contemporary atheist writing. Taylor is, however, optimistic that many young people will want to explore beyond the boundaries of this closed wasteland in the light of what he terms 'the persistent pressure of transcendence that cannot be explained away' - a sense, which, will surely resonate with many readers.

The Mission of Bogomilism

by Emily Michael

Self Published 2014, 120 pp., p/b.

This book arrived from Bulgaria and was originally published in 1937 by Boyan Boev, who was a close disciple of Beinsa Douno (Peter Deunov). It sheds new light on the nature and influence of the Bogomils in European culture and the connection of the movement with the Universal White Brotherhood as the source of cultural renewal. The branches include Hermeticism, the Essenes and the 11th century Bogomils in Bulgaria. One can then understand in a new context the evolution of various

esoteric groups. There is a good deal of historical detail about the nature of the Bogomil movement and its relation to the Albigenses and Cathars as a fundamental movement of reform culminating in the Reformation itself. Beinsa Douno embodied the latest form of the impulse, which also involves the refinements of the senses and a loving dedication to the whole on the way to developing an expanded consciousness. The remarks on the unity and communication are prophetic and there is also a warning not to ignore the laws of nature. This is an inspiring recontextualisation of the development of culture.

PSYCHOLOGY/ PARAPSYCHOLOGY

The Certainty of Eternity

by L.C. Danby

White Crow Books 2013, 179 pp., £11.99, p/b.

Few readers will have heard of the Australian medium Stan Walsh, the subject of this book. Walsh was a deeply spiritual man and those surrounding him call themselves followers of the truth of God. Some communicators recount their own experience of death as well as describing their activities in the next world. The book helps the reader understand not only the power of thought but in particular of mental prayer as concentrated thought. Walsh had many interesting and inspiring experiences and was an unusually gifted deep trance medium including automatic painting and materialising of colour. Unusually, the communicators deny the validity of reincarnation but their vision of God is truly universal as well as their message that what really matters is a loving heart.

The 31 Practices

by Alan Williams & Dr. Alison Whybrow

LID Publishing Ltd 2013, 333 pp., £16.99, h/b.

Although this excellent book is primarily aimed at organisations, there is much that the individual reader can learn about values and their application, with corresponding resources on the web site www.31practices.com. It is instructive to learn that 70% of customer brand perception is determined by their experience of employees and 41% of customer loyalty is due to employee attitude. These statistics demonstrate the importance of company ethos underpinned by company values, as also shown by the many examples cited in this interdisciplinary book. This ethos affects not only customers, but also employee satisfaction and loyalty. As one might expect, the book consists of 31 chapters, with beautiful accompanying photos by Matthieu Ricard. The five main headings are customer service, respect, integrity, excellence and innovation within which sit themes such as purpose, inspiration, happiness, mindfulness, discipline, change, wisdom, resilience, choice and leadership. Being is seen as important as doing, with an equal emphasis on mind, heart and body principles and many stories as well as apposite quotations to bring the points home. We can all use this highly informative and practical book to work through our own core values and align the way we think, feel and behave.

Acts of Consciousness

by Guy Saunders

Cambridge University Press 2014, 330 pp., £19.99, p/b.

Only later in this book does one discover the significance of the painting by Cezanne when the author explains his notion of Cubist psychology, entailing different viewpoints and multiple ways of looking at the nature of persons, mind and the world. The structure of the book is based around the three verbs to be, to have and to know. Saunders draws on his background in the arts, his interest in consciousness studies, his work in social psychology and, perhaps, most interestingly,

his research into the psychology of captivity in relation to our normal experience of life. Along with many other thinkers, he defines the term person in a relational fashion entailing the presence of others. In captivity, these others may have to be virtual and one of his subjects, Vladimir Bukovsky, coins the term polyphony to describe the presences he conjures up in order to survive the state of isolation. In making its case, the book uses three thought experiments: teleporting from Derek Parfit, Nagel's what it's like to be a bat, and Mary the colour scientist. He also brings in many other supporting examples, including the film *Martin Guerre* where a man returning from war after 10 years assumes the identity of a previous inhabitant.

Saunders discusses three approaches to the person in terms of the ego, bundle theory and a social perspective, each of which encompasses a viewpoint, but with an emphasis on the social and issues concerning the nature of the continuity of identity. From the social standpoint, death only has consequences for those left behind, as there is no you. The author cannot imagine what survival would be like in the absence of our familiar background. It is quite right, though, that we become persons in the sense he means. His conclusions are reflections on freedom and captivity where captivity 'amplifies the familiar features of life and living by turning down the volume on everyday events' and making us realise how much we depend on the presence of other people. An act of consciousness as in the title implies commitment and responsibility. In this sense we are acting freely, contrary to the orthodoxy prevailing in much of neuroscience. At the end of the book, he characterises Cubist psychology more precisely as enabling us to work with contradictions, ambiguities and paradoxes and the realisation that no single view can be comprehensive. The book is very clearly set out and argued, providing a novel perspective on the nature of subjective experience.

Energy Vision, The Conscious Use of Energy by Rinaldo Lampis

Spirit Action Publishing 2014, 257 pp., no price given, p/b.

This is a personal interpretation of the conscious use of energy with 32 specific techniques described. The interpretation is very wide, asserting that energy constitutes all visible things, the Earth's invisible energies as well as thought energies that create our reality. The three laws of energy are fundamental to his approach: that everything vibrates, that energy must flow and that energy of a particular quality has an attractive force. There are then chapters on the brain, the body as mirror of the mind, thoughts and visualisation, the subtle energy bodies, food, smell, sound, colour and life itself. Based on personal insight as well as extensive reading, the book is also a practical guide to higher realisation.

Pleasant Voyage Discovering the Invisible World

by Rinaldo Lampis

Spirit Action Publishing 2014, 247 pp., no price given, p/b.

At a time when there is a tendency to widen and deepen our understanding of reality, this personal account explores the many interfaces between the physical and other dimensions with the emphasis on healing, and especially Roger Dumo, who is clearly a man of considerable power. An important premise is understanding the nature of thought as the world perceived from the inside out and at different levels, including prayer and maintaining a connection with the divine mind. Many examples are given, as in the lives of St Padre Pio, Joan of Arc, St Hildegard of Bingen and Paracelsus. These people became conduits for spiritual force and had a corresponding effect on the people who surrounded them. More generally, resonance is an important principle in this worldview and we have to be aware of what resonance vibration we are setting up or emanating. See www.spiritaction.net

The Depth of the Human Person

edited by Michael Welker

Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co 2014, 396 pp., £45, p/b.

This wide-ranging volume features many prominent theologians and philosophers on their understanding of the human person. The four sections deal with introductory questions, scientific and anthropological perspectives, sources of Christian traditions and contemporary theological, ethical and interdisciplinary challenges. For some people, you are your brain, but none of the contributors agree with this proposition. Many categories are dealt with, including the familiar ones of flesh, body, mind, soul and spirit. For John Polkinghorne, the soul is an information pattern that may continue to exist within the divine memory - he insists, like many other commentators, that we are psychosomatic entities, and that dualisms of parts or substances will not do. Malcolm Jeeves lucidly explains advances in neuroscience, psychology and evolutionary biology, quoting Freeman Dyson about the value of literature as a storehouse of human experience. Two essays explore terms in the Old and New Testaments, which enhances the reader's understanding of the ways in which they are used. In particular, the categories of body/soma and flesh/sarx are examined, both in the work of Paul and the Gnostics. There is an interesting essay on moral inwardness and another at the end on the human person at the edges of life and death, examining how our sense of identity changes with respect to self-determination, corporeality and relationality. Although primarily aimed at scholars, general readers interested in the theme will benefit greatly from these sophisticated discussions.

Wishes Fulfilled

by Dr Wayne Dyer

Hay House 2012, 203 pp., £10.99, p/b.

Dr Wayne Dyer will be well known to some readers. In November, I received a CD set called *Divine Love* and was listening to it on the way to a meeting in Edinburgh when he suddenly recounted an extraordinary experience connected with the Bulgarian sage Beinsa Douno and mentioning a book I had edited in 1991. I therefore ordered this book where some of this incident is related. It is evident that Wayne Dyer has an extraordinary capacity to align himself with significant spiritual teachers, even to the extent that some people see the face of these teachers superimposed on his while he is speaking about them. These include Lao Tsu and Francis of Assisi. He is also able to reformulate ideas from other sources, principal among which in this book are the I AM discourses by St Germain (which someone sent him in a packet of books) and the little-known work of Neville Goddard, and simply wrote as Neville and a selection of whose work I read couple of years ago.

The first part of this book is about changing your concept of yourself and aligning with the highest self, which is the I Am presence within each of us. This is fundamental work if deep change is to come about in our lives and we are to lose our many self-imposed limits. The second part outlines the foundations of wishes fulfilled, namely imagination, living from the end, feeling the wish fulfilled, attention, and the importance of preparing for sleep when one enters the unconscious mind. It is critical to formulate affirmations in the present. The book finishes with a number of personal experiences and questions for the reader about the process and its fulfilment. Needless to say, these techniques can be used at a number of different levels but their ultimate expression is spiritual rather than material.

Conversations With History

by Susan Lander

Hay House Publishers 2014, 230 pp., £12.99, p/b.

This book of remarkable insights and reflections was channelled by a lawyer and ostensibly orchestrated by Benjamin Franklin from the other side. Each chapter takes the form of an interview and one of the remarkable features is how the distinctive personalities come through. No two interviews are alike. There are both historical and contemporary figures. The most ancient is the Greek poetess Sappho, who produces some extraordinarily beautiful new lyrical poetry, quite unlike anything else in the book. The next most ancient figure is Charlemagne with his strong warrior ethos, then Nostradamus reflecting on his prophecies. Among the best known other figures are Gandhi, Einstein, Henry Ford and Steve Jobs. Then there is also Frederick Douglass, Andy Warhol, Leni Riefenstahl, Louis Armstrong, Walt Disney and Dudley Moore. In other words, a huge variety of voices. Gandhi's message is one of peace, love and nonviolence, while Eva Peron says: 'Be unafraid in whatever you do. Live to your greatest ability. Always follow your dreams. Try not to judge yourself. As long as you are striving, you are doing the right thing, and you will be surprised at what you can accomplish. The world is waiting to see you.' Each contributor draws important conclusions from their own lives and demonstrates a continuity of concern for our collective future.

FUTURE STUDIES/ECONOMICS/ ECOLOGY

The Earth Charter, Ecological Integrity and Social Movements

by Laura Westra and Mirian Vilela

Earthscan Ltd 2014, 250 pp., £85, h/b.

The Earth Charter is a unique document published in the year 2000 and now endorsed by more than 6,500 organisations. The second half of the title indicates the direction of this book towards ecological integrity by means of generating a powerful social movement to realise the aims and aspirations of the Charter. The main themes the search for common ground, international law, ethics and social movements, human rights, indigenous voices for integrity, and the nature of government decisions in relation to environmental policies and social movements. Ron Engel, one of those involved in the drafting of the Charter, provides an excellent overview of its promise, limits and future within the context of the possibility of a new axial age. As he puts it, the question is how to build an international movement with the power to usher in a new era of global governance in which justice and peace prevail and the ecological integrity of the planet is restored and maintained.

The Charter itself represents an important step towards a realised Earth community, but the forces maintaining the current order are extremely powerful and have only their own short-term interests in view. Hence the need for a powerful social movement for change. The basis of a new axial age is relational ontology extending to the whole of life, not just to humans. This involves an interplay between interdependence and autonomy as well as the harnessing of ethical thought within the context of current economic and political realities. Without a credible social analysis, this cannot be achieved. The last part of this essay discusses the most important issues to be faced and steps that could be taken. It is clear that NGOs must play a leading role here, as the initiative will not be taken by governments, who are under the influence of those supporting unsustainable business as usual based on continued economic growth, free markets and treating the environment as a resource to be exploited. In my view, the Earth Charter should be a core part of educational curricula, but far too many people are unaware of its existence and significance. Incidentally, it has been powerfully supported by Mikhael Gorbachev.

An Introduction To The Green Economy

by Adrian C. Newton and Elena Cantarello

Earthscan Ltd 2014, 358 pp., £32.99, p/b.

Extraordinarily comprehensive in its interdisciplinary scope based on environmental science, this textbook draws on ecology, geography, social science, psychology, sustainability science, law and economics. It becomes clear that there is no single agreed definition of a green economy but rather a number of different approaches. There is a good historical background and a comparison with sustainable development. The chapter on sustainability science is exemplary, explaining important concepts such as resilience, tipping points, critical loads and planetary boundaries as well as the nature of systems thinking. Individual chapters discuss climate change and carbon management, biodiversity and ecosystem services, green technology and renewable energy, environmental law and social justice. Overfishing of cod is given as an example of ecosystem collapse and the principles of environmental law are explained as practical policy options. As well as a lengthy bibliography of primary sources at the end of each chapter, there are reflection points throughout, and the final two chapters are devoted to the green economy in practice and the outlook for the green economy. This covers agriculture, forests, fisheries, water management, urban development, green tourism and sustainable consumption and production. The first such text dates from 1989, and it is extraordinary how much progress has been made in the field since then. For anyone seriously interested in the field, this book is essential reading.

Global Catastrophes

by Bill McGuire

Oxford University Press 2014 (2002), 123 pp., £7.99, p/b.

The author of this engaging and at times chilling book is professor emeritus of geophysical climate hazards at UCL. The book begins with the arresting statistic that over 100,000 people on average lose their lives in natural disasters every year. Only a small proportion of the worst incidents reach the newspapers but the overall impact is very considerable. McGuire begins with a potted history of the Earth, which turns out to be a much more dangerous place than we might immediately realise, depending on where we live. There are 150 earthquakes a year over Richter Scale six and some 50 active volcanoes; and around 25,000 people a year are killed in floods. The author pulls no punches on global warming, spelling out the likely catastrophic effects of runaway climate change by the year 2100, making the world a much more hazardous place for future generations. He takes a sanguine view of attempts at geo-engineering as a desperate way of trying to maintain economic growth and business as usual.

He discusses the possible advent of much colder conditions in Europe as a result of the slowing down of major ocean currents before moving on to super eruptions, giant tsunamis (the potential for a shelf under the Canary Islands to slip will cause tidal waves of 50 m high on the east coast of America), and the inevitable Tokyo earthquake now quite a number of years overdue in terms of its historical rhythm. Finally, we have threats from outer space from asteroids and comets. If this sounds like a grim reading, it is, but we should be aware of these possibilities and actions that can be taken within reason. These mainly apply to global warming, and it does now seem that this challenge is being taken very much more seriously, although it is still unlikely that action will be taken on a sufficient scale prevent some of the prospects described in this book. And there is one really dangerous joker in the pack. The Arctic tundra contains 1 trillion tons of methane and it is possible that a 50 million ton 'burp' could occur, even in the next ten years, which would immediately raise global average temperatures by 1.3 degrees C.

After Sustainability

by John Foster

Earthscan Ltd 2015, 230 pp., £29.99, p/b.

This book takes the view that dangerous climate change is coming, setting out the argument in a series of what the author calls vicious syllogisms: if we do not keep average temperature rise below 2°, we are in for potentially catastrophic climate change; if we do not keep further anthropogenic CO₂ emissions to 1,300 billion tonnes, we shall not keep average temperature rises below 2°C; we are not even minimally embarked on such a programme, so we are already in for dangerous climate change. Between 1992 and 2012, CO₂ emissions increased by 36%, atmospheric CO₂ concentration by 9% and the global average temperature by 0.4%. The three parts of the book discuss denial, hope (as opposed to optimism) and retrieval. Central to the argument is the proposal that progressivism is at the heart of an unsustainable mind-set, and is also embodied in the notion of sustainable development. It is a key enlightenment premise that life is about the betterment of mankind and our conditions of life, which have indeed improved immeasurably for most people over the last hundred years. However, the basic contradiction remains one of unlimited economic growth on a finite planet driven by both our economic and political systems. The consequences of our actions will entail a re-eruption of the inescapable wild back into our lives, necessitating what he calls existential resilience. So the key question becomes whether we can learn from rather than repeat and reinforce the patterns of progressivism. The jury is certainly out, and this book provides a chilling analysis of our situation.

Creating a New Consensus on Population

by Jyoti Shankar Singh

Earthscan Ltd 2014, 252 pp., £27.99, p/b.

This book is about the politics of reproductive health, reproductive rights and women's empowerment. The author is an expert in the field in which he has been involved for several decades, even before the landmark Cairo population conference in 1994. Among the important clusters of issues are the integration of population and development strategies, population growth and structure, reduction of mortality and morbidity, and population distribution and migration. The book traces the history of major conferences on population and the implementation of their recommendations. As the subtitle suggests, there is a particular emphasis on women's empowerment and the real accomplishment of these meetings, which were carefully prepared in advance and followed up. Of particular interest is the Holy See view on the 1994 deliberations. There is no doubt that the empowerment of women combined with family planning advice is absolutely key to containing population increase, as I have also learned first hand from this year's winner of the St Andrews Prize for the Environment, which integrated reproductive health with conservation. It is also important to put all this within the wider context of the Millennium Development Goals.

Exploring Climate Change

by Mike Hulme

Earthscan Ltd 2013, 352 pp., £48.95 h/b.

Mike Hulme is one of the best-known climate scientists, having established the Tyndall Centre and the University of East Anglia in 2000 and been a common spokesman for the science of climate change over the last 25 years. This volume brings together his most popular and prominent articles, essays, speeches, interviews and reviews over this period as is divided into eight sections: the public life of climate change, science, research, culture, policy, communication, controversy and futures. This means that the contents are arranged thematically as well as chronologically, with an introductory overview to each section. This gives the reader a good idea of the evolution of thinking in this area over a generation and

reminds one of the changing discourse, mediated both by IPCC reports and periodic international negotiations where science and politics overlap. A good example of this is the so-called Climategate at Copenhagen in 2009, which can best be understood as a political rather than a scientific strategy, although it to some extent mirrored divisions in scientific opinion. The inherent uncertainties of prediction make it all the more difficult to translate data into policy, especially when vested oil interests are spending great deal of money muddying the waters in their favour. As Hulme points out, the key question is the extent to which climate change is anthropogenic, although I myself regard the overall impact of humans on the environment as the most serious issue, of which climate change is one of the symptoms. Anyone looking for a deeper understanding of science and policy on climate change should read this book.

The Wastewater Gardener

by Mark Nelson

Synergetic Press 2014, 206 pp., \$23.95, p/b.

Charmingly subtitled 'preserving the planet one flush at a time', this book recounts the author's work in this area over the last 30 years. As agriculturalists like Sir Albert Howard have remarked, not recycling human waste is itself a terrible waste, since nature works in cycles, as composting so readily demonstrates. The author has created wastewater gardens around the world, catalysed by his experience of being enclosed in Biosphere 2 in the late 1980s. Here he proposes many ways of managing the 'Fecesphere' and invites readers to consider the travel itinerary of their own waste as they flush the loo. In our case, this means a septic tank in a nearby field. He makes a number of recommendations for both individuals and society, for instance separating shit from the water cycle wherever possible, perhaps by means of composting toilets; also using wastewater to create green belts around cities and reusing shit locally wherever possible, sending it back to the land in an economical way.

Cheaponomics

by Michael Carolan

Taylor & Francis 2014, 213 pp., £17.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'the high cost of low prices', this informative and entertaining book shows that cheapness is in fact an illusion and that hidden costs show up elsewhere in the system, which he calls cost socialism as opposed to cost externalities. He begins by observing that cheap has two meanings, as illustrated by the remark of his daughter when some plastic toys broke, that these cheap toys sure are cheap! In two telling examples, he points out that Walmart was selling a microwave for \$10 so that one could say that one had bought it but not really paid for it. The second example relates to the amount of materials used in the manufacture of a computer: 1000 lb of rock and ore waste, 529 lb of fossil fuels, 49 lb of chemicals and 3,307 lb of water; in addition, there is 772 lb of CO₂ equivalents over the life cycle of the machine. It is also worth noting that a Google search is the equivalent of 7 g of CO₂ emissions due to the high electricity cost of servers. Another arresting statistic is that the top 3,000 companies in the world created \$2.2 trillion worth of environmental damage in 2008.

The three sections of the book cover cheap stuff, cheap economies and communities, and transitioning towards affordability. Two chapters in the first section deal with plastic bags and the high cost of cheap foods. Apparently, 137 million barrels of oil are required to produce a year's supply of plastic bags, which makes it all the more important that more and more jurisdictions are introducing taxes. On the food front, one of the hidden costs is obesity, given that cheapness is associated with the kind of junk foods largely responsible. Already in 2005, \$190 billion was spent on obesity related health care expenses in the US, or 21% of the total. Large companies also destroy smaller local shops

and, as a consequence, less money is recycled back into the local economy. Cars also have costs to public health and the environment, with 1.3 million deaths annually. The author suggests that we need to redefine prosperity and, in the last chapter, offers 10 recommendations for the good and the affordable. These include reforming political processes by increasing transparency and enhancing democracy, which many other people have also called for. Other important recommendations include encouraging the kind of full employment that creates just and sustainable communities, strengthening policies that protect people, implementing a maximum wage and bringing in more accurate pricing. Overall, this is an important and thought-provoking book and a useful contribution to new economic thinking.

Sustainable Food Systems

edited by Terry Marsden and Adrian Morley

Taylor & Francis 2014, 230 pp., \$145, h/b.

In the aftermath of the food price spikes of 2008, scholars and policymakers have become much more aware of the dynamics of food security and its inherent relationship with sustainability. A new paradigm is emerging, which is the ecosystem-based and more localised, as we can see in developments, at least in the UK. Increasing population and demand for food is meeting a potentially diminishing resource base that can give rise to conflicts over increasingly scarce resources – although much depends on the proportion of protein and vegetables in the diet. We could already feed 9 billion people on a plant-based diet. The various chapters look at governance, procurement policies, sustainable food supply chains, bio-security, the new rural – urban interface and the key importance of urban strategies for food security and sustainability, especially given continued migration into cities. Overall, the book gives a good analysis of the social, economic and political drivers that can create a more sustainable food system, linking research, practice and policy.

The Broken Promise of Agricultural Progress

Cameron Muir

Earthscan Ltd 2014, 230 pp., £48.95, p/b.

This study draws more general conclusions from an analysis of the agricultural impact of Western agriculture on the plains of New South Wales, from the mid-19th century onwards. The author refers to the slow violence of ecological imperialism associated with the displacement of indigenous tribes and the imposition of an inappropriate agricultural model on the landscape. It is extraordinary to think that no cloven hoof had ever set foot in Australia until the settlers arrived with cattle and sheep. This had an early impact on watering holes and subsequently on the quality of the landscape. Science came up against ecological limits as all the available water was drawn out through boreholes. The various chapters describe aspects of this colonial impact and attempts to mitigate it. In the wider picture, we have reached a stage where agriculture needs to be remodelled along regenerative lines as we recreate the fabric of life along a more sustainable trajectory and our food systems seek to promote overall health rather than profit, using a model of harmony rather than control.

Growing Biodynamic Crops

by Friedrich Sattler and Eckard von Wistinghausen

Floris Books 2014, 218 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Originally part of Bio-Dynamic Farming Practice, this manual has become a standard textbook in the field and may be of interest to gardeners as well as farmers. There are initial chapters on factors affecting plant growth and land-use, and these followed by more detailed treatment of grassland, cropping sequence, seeds and sowing techniques, cultivation and arable crops.

Go Paleo?

by Eve Gilmore

Hammersmith Books 2014, 183 pp., £14.99, p/b

Many readers will have heard about the Paleo diet inspired by the work of the doctor and dentist Weston Price. The author is a nutritionist and leading expert in the field. Here she provides an overview of the Paleo approach, with arguments both for and against and explaining why and how she has modified the purist form. Prepare to have some common myths about the health benefits of a purely vegetarian diet exploded by the science cited in this book, much of which has been carried out by Dr Loren Cordain. The chapter headings and sub-headings convey the gist of the argument: cereal killers (the downside of high carb grains), milking the facts about dairy, beans may be just a lot of hot air, not soy good for you, pseudo's corner on pseudo-proteins, saturated fat as your new best friend, sugar beat and vegetarianism – dicing with diet. The author's conclusions are based on her extensive experience of nearly every diet under the sun, and she makes the valid observation that the initial success of many diets may be due as much to what they exclude – refined flour, sugar and carbohydrates – as what they include. An eye-opener is the prevalence of many anti-nutrients in vegetarian foods, such as phytic acid, and the argument that, although there may be an initial detox effect, most vegetarian diets deplete bodily systems in the long run – so you can survive rather than thrive on a vegetarian diet. In the end, though, there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all diet but this book helps readers work out what is best for them.

The Urban Caveman

by Eve Gilmore

Hammersmith Books 2014, 160 pp., £14.99, p/b

Eve Gilmore spent six years developing this book as an update of the diet for the 21st-century with the strap line that giving up does not mean going without since the diet excludes grains, beans, dairy and sugar. The urban caveman diet is based on Paleo principles that reproduce modern dishes using alternatives to the excluded foods. Weston Price himself favoured a higher fat lower protein ratio, although it has to be said that there is no standard hunter-gatherer diet. Eve specifies important equipment for the kitchen and explains ingredients and replacements for common non-Paleo ingredients. Coconut is a key ingredient in various forms. The bulk of the book is devoted to recipes, beginning with 'dairy', bakery and patisserie before moving on to breakfasts, starters and various forms of main course involving meat and fish. Finally, there are sections on sources and gravies, deserts, pickles and chutneys. It is certainly the definitive book of its kind.



EDUCATION

Oxford Dictionary of Quotations

Oxford University Press 1941, 1126 pp., £30, h/b.

This is the eighth edition of the book first published in 1941 and which of course is now online. At £30, it is excellent value with over 20,000 quotations from 3,700 authors. This edition adds 700 quotations and 200 authors. In addition to the editorial production explaining the new context, the history of the dictionary and the original introduction to the first edition by Bernard Darwin, written during the war. It was good to see French authors represented like La Rochefoucauld with quotations like 'hypocrisy is a tribute which vice pays to virtue' and 'one gives nothing so freely as advice'. John Kenneth Galbraith is represented by his definition of trickle-down theory – 'the less than elegant metaphor that if one feeds the horse enough oats, some will pass through to the road for the sparrows.' I would also like to have seen his excellent definition of forecasters consisting of two classes - those who don't know and those who don't know they don't know.'

It's Been Said Before

by Orin Hargraves

Oxford University Press 2014, 229 pp., \$24.95, h/b.

A very informative and entertaining book for anyone interested in the nature and development of language, making one reflect on the nature and context of clichés. I remember a grid given to me by a friend on which were written number of clichés such as 'level playing field', 'no-brainer' and 'at the end of the day.' The idea was to see if you could complete a line during a business meeting, at which point you would shout out bingo! Nowadays, it is possible to do a more rigorous statistical analysis of clichés in terms of usage. For instance the phrase 'stamp of' is much more of a cliché when followed by the approval than legitimacy. Some proverbs can also become clichés. The first chapters are organised around grammatical concepts such as nouns, adjectives and adverbs, while the later chapters deal with framing devices, modifier fatigue and clichés in tandem.

Each cliché is marked with a score of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating the greatest frequency. Within the chapter, entries are alphabetical with examples and comment. Taking a few at random, we have deafening silence, as elephant in the room, a fish out of water, game changer, a hive of activity, meteoric rise. I suppose the critical element is how carefully such expressions are chosen in a particular context, as they can be exactly the right phrase to convey one's meaning. As one reads through the chapters, one is reminded of the richness of expression available in English and the fact that most people make very little use of this scope. Just browsing through can potentially enhance one's passive stock of phrases so that one can speak a little more colourfully.

Words in Time and Place

by David Crystal

Oxford University Press 2014, 288 pp., £16.99, h/b.

David Crystal is well known as the foremost scholar in language, and has produced yet another extraordinary book exploring the English language through the historical thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary. This was first published in 2009 and includes 800,000 words with 235,000 entry categories. This book can provide a brief introduction to some of these words in the 15 chapters covering the history of words for dying, nose, being drunk, privy, fool, terms of endearment, oaths and exclamations, inns and hotels, prostitute, money, calm and stormy weather, old people, pop music and spacecraft. Each entry discusses influences on the emergence of words and occasionally divides them into categories, explaining each of them in chronological order with dates appended and information about whether the term is still in use. At the end of each chapter, there is a diagram

explaining the topography of the word and its associations. Just taking the chapter on fools as an example, there are some really splendid words such as hoddypeak from 1500, bobolyne from 1540, dizzard from 1546, nodcock from 1577, gowk from 1605, nincompoop from 1673 (most people will know this one), berk from 1929, plonker from 1981 and wally from 1983. Anyone interested in words and their origins will derive a great deal of pleasure from perusing this book.

Oxford Guide to Effective Argument & Critical Thinking

by Colin Swatridge

Oxford University Press 2014, 235 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Oddly enough, this brilliantly informative book contains no information about the author, but one guesses that he must be a professional philosopher. I know of no other book that so clearly sets out the best ways in which to structure an argument, whether by way of a speech, an essay or even a book. As such, any reader can benefit to refine and reinforce their approach to a given subject. As he points out at the beginning, the common elements are addressing a question, deciding where you stand on the question, reviewing the claims made by others, offering a counterclaim and supporting it with reasons and evidence, then coming to a persuasive conclusion. These constitute the chapter headings about arguing a case, clarity, fallacies and arguments, supporting the case, certainty and plausibility, the role of belief, sustained of oversimplification, the necessity of logical coherence and the overall structure of your presentation. The book is full of examples from many sources, which are discussed and put in context. Among the details treated are the danger of mistaking correlation for causation, confusing necessary and sufficient conditions, the pitfalls of overstatement and setting up a straw man. There is an excellent summary at the end as well two sample essays. While informative to the general reader, in the first year university student will perhaps have most to gain in terms of writing their most persuasive possible essay.

DEATH AND DYING

Graceful Passages

produced by Michael Stillwater and Gary Malkin

Wisdom of the World Publications (www.wisdomoftheworld.org) 2013, 75 pp. and 2 CDs, \$24.95, h/b.

This is the most beautiful resource for death and dying, but also for realising the value of life. The book and accompanying CDs are an inspiring experience - the book reproduces the spoken word - while one CD contains the words and the other only the music. It enables people to talk about life and death, forgiveness and acceptance and helps them let go and be in the now - all of which is a spiritual process. The messages come from many different spiritual traditions and include well-known teachers like Elizabeth Kubler Ross, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Arun Gandhi and Ram Dass. This kind of book reminds one of the preciousness and fragility of life. Only this week, I heard about the death in a hunting accident of a friend at whose Abbey - Spineto - I was staying only in October. We live in an illusion of permanence that can be transformed at any moment. The book also makes the important point that how we respond to change is itself the preparation for death. This resource can be highly recommended to every reader.

GENERAL

Veiled Warriors

by **Christine E. Hallett**

Oxford University Press 2014, 359 pp., £20, h/b.

This brilliant and highly informative book describes the conditions of Allied nurses during the First World War both sequentially and on the different fronts, including the Western front, the Russian and Serbian fronts and the Eastern Mediterranean. The author is Professor of Nursing History at the University of Manchester and brings a wealth of knowledge and insight to her subject. The primary function of nurses was fighting for the lives of their patients on the second battlefield of casualty clearing stations, but they also put their own lives at risk in field hospitals and hospital ships. More widely, they were fighting to gain recognition and registration for their profession as well as for the political rights of women. It emerges that there was considerable tension between trained and volunteer nurses, although they all found themselves in the same situation. The author disposes of a number of myths such as the romantic nurse, although she also illustrates this theme through analysis of a number of memoirs and novels.

Casualty clearing stations had developed by the end of 1914 and wounds were exacerbated by contamination from anaerobic bacteria causing life-threatening infections like gangrene and tetanus. The narrative is spiced by the inclusion of many vivid first-hand diaries describing appalling conditions, very long hours and relentless stress. Advances in technology meant that the wounds were of unprecedented severity and the mud meant that many men suffered from trench foot along with shell shock while sheer numbers put a huge strain on the medical staff. One particular incident involved the sinking of the hospital ship *Marquette* in less than 15 minutes. By 1916, the war had become one of attrition as the battles of Verdun and the Somme raged. To add insult to injury, the 1918 flu epidemic killed a lot of troops with compromised immune systems. However, after the end of the war the nurses achieved their registration and the profession was properly recognised. This is altogether a masterly account of a fascinating if horrific historical period.

Full of Hope and Fear

edited by **Margaret Bonfiglioli & James Munson**

Oxford University Press 2014, 392 pp., £25, h/b.

Subtitled 'the Great War Letters of an Oxford Family', these letters were found in a trunk and convey a vivid impression of the impact of the War on an unusual family based in Oxford. The father, Gilbert Slater, was a radical who had worked at Toynbee Hall in London and became Principal of Ruskin College, Oxford in 1909 but had to emigrate to Madras when the college closed in 1915 and he became Professor of Indian Economics at £1000 a year - letters were the only real form of communication between family members. Gilbert's wife, Violet, was an artist and pacifist who deplored the effects of the War. The title comes from a letter from Gilbert to his son Owen (named after the social reformer Robert Owen) as he set out for his training: 'our hearts go with you, always a little bit anxious, full of hope and fear, for your being well, and doing well, and living a good life.' There are nearly 400 letters between family members, but also from friends of Owen - as the letters were never intended for publication, they reflect the everyday concerns of a family engaged in the life of the time, as James Munson amply explains in his informative introduction. Most of the letters date from 1918-19 and convey a vivid impression of the life of military training and subsequently at the front and just after the War.

Apprenticeship

by **David Kindersley, Lida Lopes Cardozo Kindersley and Martin Gayford**

Pax Intrantibus 2003, 51 pp., £12, p/b. www.kindersleyworkshop.co.uk

I recently had the pleasure of being in Italy at Spineto Abbey where the letter-cutter Lida Kindersley was awarded one of the annual human ecology prizes for her work. My uncle Hew Lorimer was a sculptor and letter-cutter, who, like Lida's late husband David, was apprenticed to Eric Gill in the 1930s. The short film about letter cutting made a great impression on me, as has this book on apprenticeships, subtitled 'the necessity of learning by doing,' and with a foreword by the Prince of Wales. The three short chapters provide a brief history of apprenticeship, the experience of David Kindersley and then that of Lida with David. The essential point is that this knowledge is handed down within a community, as was painting in the 17th century, where many great masterpieces emerged from workshops without necessarily being signed by the master himself. Only by doing can one achieve a feel for the art and this must be done slowly, with absolute concentration, preferably in an atmosphere of timelessness. Perfecting technique is itself a slow process and the responsibility for a collective work his enormous - everyone has to do their best if a team is engaged in cutting letters. This book on apprenticeship is also a philosophy of life.

Animal Wisdom

by **Linda Bender DVM**

North Atlantic Books 2014, 177 pp., \$18.95, p/b.

Endorsed by Jane Goodall, who writes about the benefit we get from close relationship with animals and the way in which they can enrich us spiritually, this book expands the reader's understanding of the capacity of animals, including ESP and a deep sense of connectedness. Sometimes the message comes through collectively, as with a herd of buffalo appealing not to be forgotten by humans. One extraordinary story concerns an elephant in her 40s who recognised her keeper whom she had not seen for 37 years, when she was five. There is a nice quotation header from Samuel Butler saying that all the animals except for man note that the principal business of life is to enjoy it. St Francis (I have just been to Assisi and to his retreat at Le Celle) is the epitome of a human being relating compassionately to other creatures by acting trustingly. There is an instructive passage about the circle of life, giving and receiving in the food chain: 'Like life, all food is a gift. We share our bodies as food for the greater good of all; this is the natural process of life and death in the wild. We are not so afraid of death. We are much more concerned about life, living and surviving every day. We gather only what we need to survive and do not waste.' Profound wisdom from a different source of intelligence. The author also observes that fear of death is a fear of losing control. The practical guide in the last part of the book encourages readers to return to the perceptions of their childhood, which also means connecting with the divine within and having one's sensory attention in the present.

In Confidence: Talking Frankly About Fame

by **Laurie Taylor**

Zero Books 2014, 187 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'talking frankly about fame' this is a compilation of a series of interviews on Sky Arts that constitutes a reflection on the nature of celebrity. The introduction reminds the reader of other interview series such as Face to Face with John Freeman, In the Psychiatrist's Chair with Anthony Clare and the series with Sir Michael Parkinson. The book is structured thematically with interviews about making music, art and stories, with about four interviews per chapter. There are then reflections on family and friends and the nature of identity relation to celebrity. Stephen Fry discusses various ways in which he copes with his own fame, sometimes with

self-deprecation. He reflects that most communications are looking to take something from you, which is ultimately exhausting. It is very instructive to learn that Nigel Kennedy's trademark casual clothing on stage actually began with him leaving his smart outfit in New York when he was playing in London! He explains that much of his persona is designed to break down barriers, which one senses in his performance of Bach in an Irish parish church with comfortable informality. Sir Alan Ayckbourn recounts an amusing incident with a local who is astonished that he still lives in Scarborough when he could live in Bridlington, having made a great deal of money. One intriguing line of demarcation becoming a celebrity is when journalists become interested in details of private lives, as so many famous people have found to their cost. The book gives an important insight into the varieties of contemporary fame.

Women in Waiting

by Julia Ogilvy

Bloomsbury Publishing 2014, 204 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Since the publication of this important book about prejudice at the heart of the Church, the General Synod of the Church of England has finally voted in favour of women bishops, which was not the case at the time of writing where the motion had been rejected in 2012. Reading the vivid accounts of the 12 remarkable women included in this book is a revelation for most readers unfamiliar with the field. Women were first ordained priests in 1994, and half of ordinands are now women. Even now, however, they are still operating in what is largely a male ethos, as many incidents in this book show. Feelings on either side of the debate run deep and are passionately held. Julia's experience as a trustee of Tearfund gave her an insight into the plight of women worldwide, of which this book is a particular illustration. Its simple contention of the equal worth of women is far-reaching and crucial.

The women in the book occupy or occupied significant positions within the church hierarchy, including two American bishops, the chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Dean of York, Archdeacon of Canterbury, Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. As such, they are highly capable and articulate, which comes across strongly in these interviews. The message of love and compassion is more important than theology and more relevant to most people. The two women serving in cathedrals find the rhythm of prayer extremely important as a counterbalance to daily activity and pressure. I think it also enables them to develop reserves of courage to cope with the difficult situations that many describe and which make them so inspirational. Each woman chooses a favourite biblical verse and character – here Martha is chosen on more than one occasion. The last interviewee is Baroness Kennedy, not herself a church leader, but a powerful advocate of women in society and a person of immense commitment and resource who was involved in the campaign for women bishops. She sees the basic issue as one of power and rightly regards it as critical that the female perspective is fully represented in all social institutions. Paradoxically, powerful women can be pejoratively sidelined as pushy when a similar man might be approvingly described as ambitious. This book is essential reading for a real understanding of what has been going on the Church from the perspective of senior women who have been real cultural pioneers.

Digital Inferno

Paul Levy

Clairview Books 2014, 193 pp., £12.99, p/b.

How can we survive and thrive in a digital world without succumbing to what the author calls digital drift, when you suddenly find you have spent far more time than intended on various vacuous Internet activities? This stimulating book gives useful guidance about how to use technology more consciously and deliberately. The author explains that the new generation of programmers have a more integrated view than previously, although he also warns that corporations are finding ever more sophisticated means of penetrating our lives. It is evident that we may not ourselves be aware of the automatic nature of our reactions to new technology, but some telling diary entries illustrate how unconscious we may become. One person nearly gets run over in the street, while another ex-lorry driver has his sleep disturbed from playing new hang-gliding games for two hours before going to bed. Interspersed in the text is a series of boxes with suggested exercises such as setting aside slots of time for distraction, not consulting your mobile phone until you have had a shower in the morning, not being connected at all at certain periods in the day, and using what the author calls 'placing' – taking control of your relationship with digital technology. Other suggestions include 'mindful posting' and resisting the urge to tweet about all your experiences (many of us don't do this anyway!). All in all, this is a balanced consideration of the dangers of digital drift.



CHAOS

*Ah, Chaos! 'cross the globe you stir
Now grown so great from whence you were.
But was your birth from humble things
Stirred to life by butterfly wings
Or, spreading like a rippled pond
That leaves the centre far beyond
To reach the corners of the world,
Really just a pebble hurled?*

by Peter Anthony Davis