



books in brief

David Lorimer

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

SCIENCE

Moonstruck

Ernest Naylor

Oxford 2015, 229 pp., £18.99, h/b.

The author comes from a background of marine zoology and has taken an interest not only in circadian rhythms and chronobiology but now also in patterns of behaviour associated with the phases of the moon. After an initial chapter on moon myths and legends, he turns to scientific studies where some sea creatures appear to have internal clocks corresponding to driven tides, while others exhibit behaviour correlated with the intensity of moonlight. Interestingly, some more examples of moon-related rhythms have their origins in folklore. One example he gives is the behaviour of turtles, which some of us have seen emerging at full moon at Frenchman's Cove beach. This is an illustration of breeding behaviour correlated with the periodicity of the moon. In a chapter on the moon and the human condition, he comments that no menstrual cycles actually coincide with the true lunar month and that any correlations are likely to be due to chance rather than causality. The only reasonably validated area seems to be related to sleep patterns. The book documents an interesting emerging field.

Moons

David A. Rothery

Oxford 2015, 153 pp., £7.99, p/b.

This very short introduction will tell you all you need to know about moons. Galileo discovered the moons of Jupiter through his telescope in January 1610, which he documented on a page reproduced here. However, it was Simon Marius who gave them definitive Greek names in 1614. The Italian Giovanni Cassini (1625-1712) made some detailed observations of Jupiter's moons, which amazingly led him to hypothesise that light does not travel infinitely fast. There are in fact 190 moons in our solar system but many of this number are outer moons of Jupiter (59) and Saturn (38). Our moon is the fifth largest. After his initial chapter on the discovery and significance of moons, the author moves on to our own moon and its influence, the moons of other planets including Mars and moons of small bodies before concluding with exomoons in other planetary systems. A highly readable and informative book.

Failure – Why science is so successful

Stuart Firestein

Oxford 2015, 286 pp., \$21.95, h/b.

This is the sequel to the author's book *Ignorance*, and builds on some of its insights. The main thrust of the book will be familiar to historians of science (Firestein spent a year at the history and philosophy of science department in Cambridge): that the public perception of science as a rule-based and fact-accumulating system inexorably advancing its frontiers of knowledge is incorrect. The real picture, as Gerald Holton showed with his distinction between S1 and S2 (science as pursued and science as written up) is much messier: failure is a stepping stone to eventual success, although one should remember that scientific knowledge is always incomplete and that some of our current theories will prove mistaken – many brilliant scientists of the past held views that we now know to be wrong. Apparently Sir Alan Hodgkin always spent

more time with his students who came up against problems, as this might enable him to come up with better questions and experiments. The fifteen chapters range across defining failure, the scientific basis and method of failure, the integrity of failure (negative results are an opportunity for honesty), medical aspects and pluralism.

One of the author's messages, echoing Samuel Beckett, is that it is good to learn how to fail better. Failures give us useful feedback – think of Edison's lightbulb. He uses some intriguing historical examples such as Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood in 1612 (even Leonardo – not mentioned here – missed it). He withheld publication until 1628 for fear of publicly disputing the ideas of Galen. At this point the author could have discussed more explicitly the role of authority in science, embedded as it is in science as a social and hierarchical institution. His contention that science is about what we don't know highlights the contribution of Sir Karl Popper and Firestein relates a telling anecdote when 17-year old Popper meets Alfred Adler and witnesses him rationalising an incongruous case to fit it in with his preconceived theory: Adler – and Freud – were not open to falsifiability. The author is not keen on hypotheses and models, preferring instead to place his emphasis on the search for explanation. Towards the end of the book he draws on Sir Isaiah Berlin's essay on the hedgehog and the fox (the hedgehog knows one big thing while the fox knows many) to argue against monism in science and for pluralism. This is a very useful discussion as it allows more flexibility into scientific thinking. The book is very engaging and witty at times; if your experiment is going badly, the author recommends you go for a coffee if it is still too early for a beer.

Letters from the Malay Archipelago

Alfred Russel Wallace, edited by John van Wythe and Kees Rookmaker

Oxford 2015, 318 pp., £12.99, p/b.

The Network held a conference in 2008 to mark the 150th anniversary of the joint paper delivered to the Linnean Society by Wallace and Darwin. This fascinating book has a foreword by Sir David Attenborough, a long-time admirer of Wallace. It was during this journey that he formulated his own version of natural selection, and this volume contains some interesting letters between Darwin and Wallace. The book is divided into a number of different sections, each with its own introduction. There are also notes on the correspondents as well as many informative footnotes. Wallace writes very vividly, so one gets a good impression of his everyday life and the tribulations he experienced with his rather inefficient assistant. On a typical day, he might collect 50 or 60 beetles, which then had to be killed and pinned for subsequent sale and display.

The tone between Darwin and Wallace is extremely cordial, and Darwin is very appreciative of the support offered by Wallace, especially when he finally published *The Origin of Species* in 1859. He is full of admiration for Wallace's adventurous spirit. In early 1859 he regards his career as 'nearly run out', a judgement certainly overturned by history. Darwin refers to his supporters as converts and describes the ferocity of attacks on him and his theory (May 1860). He says he is now case-hardened and that these attacks will only make him fight more determinedly. He ends the letter expressing 'most deeply felt wishes for your success in science and in every way.' The letters give a unique insight into one of the great natural history journeys of the 19th century.

Newton's Apple and Other Myths about Science

Edited by Ronald L. Numbers and Kostas Kampourakis

Oxford 2015, 287 pp., \$27.95, h/b.

Although the blurb uses the strong word 'debunking' this book is in fact more about setting the record straight by correcting misrepresentations and misconceptions about the nature of science and its history – its strengths and limitations. There are 27 myths, arranged chronologically, with some general considerations at the end. I was rather amazed to find that the book is dedicated to the geologist Nicolaas Rupke, whom I met more than 25 years ago and have not seen for at least 20. The titles are provocative and intriguing, and writers explain how the myth came about as well as how it was perpetuated; they are all preceded by that: for instance, that alchemy and astrology were superstitious pursuits that did not contribute to science and scientific understanding. Given such statements, readers naturally wish to know more. There are issues from astronomy, geography, physics, biology and philosophy of science. Many 19th century essays are related to the work of Darwin, but also mention Lamarck, Wallace, Mendel and Pasteur. Michael Ruse discusses directly the theories of Darwin and Wallace. Two of the essays in the final section explore whether religion has really impeded the progress of science, as proposed by proponents of the conflict hypothesis, and the popular understanding of science in relation to what scientists actually do. Although written by specialists, these essays can be recommended to any reader interested in the history of science.

Origins

Jim Baggott

Oxford 2015, 403 pp., £25, h/b.

Subtitled 'the scientific story of creation', this book is a real tour de force covering origins since the beginning of the universe, namely of space, time and energy, mass, light, stars and galaxies, chemical complexity, the sun and the planets, a habitable earth, life, complex cells and multicellular organisms, species, and, finally, in chapters 11 and 12, the origin of humanity and human consciousness. It is exceptionally well informed and well written with quite a number of illustrations. Many readers will be most interested in this final chapter on consciousness as the hard problem where he refers to Descartes, Gilbert Ryle and David Chalmers. As might be expected, his reasoned assumption is that consciousness arises as a direct result of the neural, chemical and physical processes that take place in the brain. He then proceeds to justify this assumption in terms of current research and draws selectively on Wilder Penfield, whose last book explicitly repudiates scientific materialism. He finds purpose and meaning within our social brains, which arguably leaves the mystery of consciousness still open even though there is tremendous philosophical pressure to remain within a materialistic framework.

Junk DNA

Nessa Carey

Icon Books 2015, 340 pp., £18.99, p/b.

Following her earlier book, *The Epigenetics Revolution*, Nessa Carey takes the reader on a tour through what she calls the dark matter of the genome, the 98% of so-called junk DNA, a phrase that uses in this volume but which I think is increasingly unfortunate but which technically means any gene that does not code for a protein. She discusses the many effects caused by this dark matter of the genome, although there is a certain degree of hype in the forecast panaceas for intractable diseases, a list of which she provides in the appendix. However, the author writes engagingly with many vivid examples and metaphors to help the general reader understand the more technical concepts and the important role of junk DNA in gene expression.

Black Holes - a Very Short Introduction

Katherine Blundell

Oxford 2015, 100 pp., £7.99, p/b.

This book describes not only the physics underlying the phenomenon of black holes, but also the history of thinking about these issues that led to their discovery. Blundell shows how they give rise to quasars and considers their genesis and how many there may be in the universe. She gives a lot of detail but in an accessible form for the general reader with accompanying photos and graphs.

MEDICINE-HEALTH

Super Genes

Deepak Chopra and Rudolph E. Tanzi

Rider 2015, 325 pp., £12.99, p/b.

This book follows the authors' collaboration on *Super Brain*, bringing together Chopra's expertise on mind-body medicine with Tanzi's knowledge of genetics – he is professor of neurology at Harvard. Readers will be aware of the revolution of thinking brought about by epigenetics, which has overturned neurogenetic determinism and clarified the extent to which we ourselves are responsible for the expression or non-expression of our genetic make-up. Genes are not fixed and unchangeable – they are predispositions rather than fate, as Dean Ornish puts it. We can therefore learn how to make our genes help us. The book is divided into three parts: the science of transformation, lifestyle choices for radical well-being, and guiding your own evolution. Perhaps the most important point to emerge from the first part is the key role played in health by our microbiome – our total ecology of micro-organisms in our guts. The authors describe some fascinating new work by Dr Paresch Dandona on foods and inflammation – a fast-food breakfast inflames the system while a high fibre one has the opposite effect. They give some guidance on what to do to reset the microbiome (p. 90).

In the second part they look at lifestyle choices for diet, stress, exercise, meditation, sleep and the emotions. Starting with an indicative quiz, they move on to discuss three kinds of choice we can make in these areas: easy, hard and experimental, giving examples of each and the scientific backing for healthy choices. We don't often think of the long-term implications of such everyday choices and may eventually have to make some hard choices in relation to health challenges. Bad choices may feel good while good choices often demand delayed gratification. Readers can therefore choose their own degree of commitment. Cells and indeed the body as a whole have their own wisdom with which we can choose to co-operate. The authors list nine essentials for life in the cell's wisdom, adding ways of living these in practice, including having a higher purpose, intimacy and communion and allowing the flow of life to bring you what you need; then they add being mindful to their view of evolution. This is a wise, practical and empowering book.

The Decision Trap**Silja Samerski***Imprint Academic 2015, 170 pp., £14.95, p/b.*

This important book could not be less similar in its slant than the one immediately above. The framework within which the discussions of the book take place is one of genetic determinism, statistics and risk management. While Chopra and Tanzi explain that epigenetics means that our genome is responsive to choices and the environment, genetic counsellors in the US give patients a lesson in genetics using a paradigm of managerial rationality as they describe genetic risks and test options in a way that makes their clients dependent on experts and technology. Paradoxically, the opportunity provided for an informed choice is ultimately disempowering. The clients become gene carriers, risk carriers and statistical constructs with a risk profile so that they are left with a sense of helpless self-determination. This is the decision trap of the title imposed by the system, a form of disempowering autonomy. The book is a powerful and necessary critique of what is essentially a left hemisphere mindset.

Health Revelations from Heaven and Earth**Tommy Rosa and Dr Stephen Sinatra***Hay House 2015, 245 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

This unusual book is a collaboration between a healer had a near death experience in 1999 and a holistic cardiologist. The introduction explains how the two men first met at a lecture by Sinatra, the background to which one finds a more about later in the book. Rosa was immediately able to make an intuitive diagnosis of Sinatra's painful hip and it was not long before the two men were working together. Rosa sees energy at a vibrational level and gives a detailed account of his NDE and a meeting with teacher in an atmosphere of love and joy. The next eight chapters explain the health revelations of the title: connection, faithfulness, vital force, grounding, the body temple, positivity and purpose. In each case the nonphysical information is given first and is followed by the medical prescription based on research and experience with some simple guidance about applying the advice. The final chapter recounts Rosa's difficult journey after his NDE and the struggles he had with his health, culminating in the meeting described in the introduction. Is a strong message of interconnectedness and spirituality, advising readers how they themselves can become part of evolutionary advance that also contributes to our collective process.

PHILOSOPHY-RELIGION**Thomas Merton Peacemaker****John Dear***Orbis Books 2015, 191 pp., \$20, p/b.*

I read Merton's *On Peace* over 30 years ago, and remember reading one of the pieces entitled *A Devout Meditation on Adolf Eichmann* to a group of Wykehamists. At the end of the reading, you could hear a pin drop, such was the powerful impact of Merton's writing. This is an important new book by a peace activist who is the author and editor of some 30 books himself. It is subtitled 'meditations on Merton, peace-making and the spiritual life' and should be read by anyone interested in Merton and/or peace. The correspondence between inner and outer is crucial, as the concepts of contemplative nonviolence and inner disarmament attest. Perhaps the essence of Christian approach is contained in the Sermon on the Mount, which so inspired Gandhi and Tolstoy.

Readers will realise, to their dismay, that much of the structural violence referred to by Merton is still in place. He himself experienced an awakening to universal, compassionate

love for every human being, which he felt was the heart of peace-making and the spiritual life. As a hermit, he pursued this also in solitude, striving to live a more conscious life of peace and prayer. The author comments: 'Life is short. Instead of wasting our days chasing after money, power or possessions, life is better spent in the present moment, in the presence of the God of peace, getting ready for an eternity in the presence of the God of peace. Life invites us to the work of peace, hope and love.' It is interesting to read how Merton convened other religious people in a movement of constructive dissent and radical prophecy. He corresponded with over 1,000 people from his hermitage, including other activists like Dan Berrigan. The book is a fount of inspiration for readers to emulate in their own way.

Inclusivity**Diarmuid O'Murchu***Orbis 2015, 234 pp., \$22, p/b.*

Diarmuid O'Murchu is an Irish priest and social psychologist who takes a radical view of the gospel message, as indicated by his title. Although Jesus was an outsider in terms of the establishment of his day, his message was inclusive and he spent much of his time with the marginalised – not the so-called pure and chosen ones who eventually became responsible for his execution as he was such a thorn in their flesh. Diarmuid translates the Kingdom of God as the Companionship of Empowerment, showing how this was at the core of Jesus's subversive message of transformation. He contrasts the devotion of consolation based on the cross with a spirituality of liberation, which he himself embraces. The message of the Sermon on the Mount is one of nonviolence and compassion – loving your enemies – as Gandhi realised. For Diarmuid, the great betrayal of the gospel came with the institutionalisation of Christianity under Constantine, when it became a centralised and politicised body based on conformity and uniformity,

Although the Gospels are written in Greek for cultural reasons, Jesus was more of a prophet transcending reason and overturning literalist traditions; nor was he a supporter of authoritarian government. Theology, however, became a supreme rational endeavour although mystical illumination is beyond reason. Diarmuid also writes about women as disciples (17 are mentioned in the epistles), observing that Mary Magdalene stayed the course at the crucifixion and was the first to see Jesus resurrected. So the book is a powerful call for an inclusive Christianity in the spirit of Pope Francis and extending to equality between men and women in the context of spiritual wholeness.

Jesus' Copernican Revolution**James P. Danaher***Paragon House 2015, 128 pp., \$16.95, p/b.*

It is well known that we interpret texts in accordance with our existing views, and this also applies to the New Testament. This subversive book argues that churches ignore the radical message set out by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, preferring to be saved rather than transformed. The greatest irony is that Jesus was highly critical of those regarded themselves as righteous, and yet we tend to try to become righteous ourselves rather than merciful as he recommended. This means having the right theology and by implication knowing that others are mistaken. The book looks at a series of themes: religion, justice, wealth, family, faith, sin, repentance, forgiveness and mercy. For the author, we all stand in need of mercy and forgiveness, especially as God judges our hearts not our behaviour. He also reminds us that Jesus's ideas on wealth and family are truly radical and greatly at variance with US Protestant orthodoxy. This is a bracing analysis that shows up are widespread sacred prejudices and calls us to be truer to Jesus's radical vision.

Much Ado about Something

Larry Culliford (SMN)

SPCK 2015, 238 pp., £12.99, p/b.

It was arresting to read on the inside cover of Larry's new book that it embodied the goals of the SMN in integrating intuitive insights with rational analysis, which I think is true. Larry's previous work has been devoted to happiness and psychology and spirituality, but here he expresses his deepest concerns as a Christian with a mature and sympathetic vision like one of his spiritual mentors, Thomas Merton. In the Afterword, which some readers may like to read first, he shares his spiritual autobiography that has given him the experience to write this searching and helpful book. He describes his early days, the influence of his grandfather, his travels and work in New Zealand and Australia, his encounters with Buddhist monks and the work of Thomas Merton, and how he returned to the UK as a psychiatrist. The reader gains a strong impression of his connection with the Holy Spirit and the love of God, which he has expressed in his work and friendships.

He sees five seamless dimensions in human life: physical, biological, psychological, social and spiritual, which he places at the centre. He explains the importance of Iain McGilchrist's work on brain hemispheres, illustrating it with different levels of understanding of Jesus's parables. Through his own experience and that of others he has come to believe that we grow through adversity not by avoiding it – as we learn the importance of combining wisdom with compassion. Larry takes us through Fowler's stages of faith and spiritual development through the arc of life. He has chapters on childhood spirituality and adolescent religion as we journey towards maturity and universality. This often entails a turnaround, a radical shift, perhaps in response to an existential challenge. Here he draws on the experience of Merton as we find a new centre beyond ourselves and begin to embody a life of loving service. He also describes various forms of worship and spiritual practice, especially meditation – but also sacred music, and as it happens I am listening to Handel's Messiah as I write this on a Sunday morning. Readers will find themselves resonating with many aspects of Larry's journey to spiritual maturity – especially his wide sympathy – and he also enables non-Christians to appreciate the depth of the Christian path and practice and its embodiment in service to others.

Pope Francis – Tradition in Transition

Massimo Faggioli

Paulist Press 2015, 104 pp., \$14.95, p/b.

This book by a Catholic academic in Minnesota offers a considered account of the early pontificate of Pope Francis, beginning from the surprise resignation of Pope Benedict XVI in February 2013. In fact, Jorge Maria Begoglio had come second to Benedict when he was elected, so his election was less of a surprise for those in the know. We went to Rome in October of that year and the crowds attending his appearance on a Wednesday were staggering, something not seen since the early days of St Jean Paul II. The book makes interesting links with some of his predecessors, including Paul VI and St John XXIII and the legacy of Vatican II. It is a papacy for the World Church as well as radical reform from within and putting the poor back in the foreground – and this book helps readers better understand what is undoubtedly a significant moment of history.

The Law of Light

Lars Muhl

Watkins 2014, 186 pp., £10.99 h/b.

I reviewed Lars Muhl's extraordinary book *The O Manuscript* in the last issue and met him in Montsegur in October, where he gave me this more recent book, an earlier signed version of which I had found in the hotel where he normally stays. The book explains the wisdom of Jesus, or Yeshua,

as expressed in Aramaic and derived from other lesser-known gospels. Lars sees Jesus emerging from the Essene background of initiates and highlights the importance of his close relationship with Mary Magdalene. He explains that the culmination of this in the Bible is the ceremony of anointing where the masculine and feminine come together as wisdom and love. Yeshua's Aramaic message is one of intimacy, freedom, selfless awareness, unconditional love, compassion and forgiveness, being present in and dedicated to everything we engage in. To this end he quotes a number of powerful prayers of invocation as a means of more genuinely living the message and integrating the various aspects of one's being into isogyny. The quality of one's thoughts and feelings is critical as they contain creative power in interacting with the principles of attraction and repulsion. This profound and wise book opens up an esoteric path of integration and transformation.

On Being Human

Michael N. Marsh

Iff Books (John Hunt) 2015, 282 pp., £15.99, p/b.

Michael Marsh has an interesting background as University lecturer in medicine and consulting gastroenterologist specialising in immunopathology. He returned to Oxford to do a degree in theology and wrote his D Phil thesis on near death and out of body experiences, published in 2010. Unfortunately, I did not see this book at the time. This new book reflects his interest in ethical outcomes of medical practice and biomedical research. It deals with the four D's of distinctiveness, dignity, disability and disposal, and encompasses a vast range of theoretical and practical issues. The first part draws on evolutionary anthropology, genetics and epigenetics, consciousness studies and the acquisition of language to build up a picture of human distinctiveness. Under dignity, he discusses theological approaches to personhood and the question of whether moral status can be ascribed to the human embryo/foetus. In this regard, he goes back to the Warnock report of the mid-1980s and argues for the bold position of ascribing moral status from the moment of conception as a human being with a unique genome. Being disabled, dysfunctional or disfigured should have no bearing on basic human dignity. Under disposal, he considers abortion and infanticide at one end of life, and assisted death and suicide at the other. He comes up with his own well argued case while sounding appropriate cautionary notes. Both the introduction and final resumé give very clear account of his argument and enhance the reader's understanding about the depth of being human. As an aside, I find it interesting that he gave an example of 'presence in absence' by speaking about a visit from his grown children where the conversation revolves around the practical what rather than the deeper who, and one is left wondering how well one still knows them. Anyone deeply concerned with these ethical issues will be greatly enriched by reading this careful book.

Aum – Awakening to Reality

Dennis Waite

Mantra Books (John Hunt) 2015, 420 pp., £20.99, p/b.

Dennis Waite is one of the foremost writers on Advaita and here he gives an in-depth explanation and exposition of the twelve key mantras of the Mandukya Upanishad describing the fundamental states of consciousness – waking, dreaming, sleeping and the fourth state. This leads him into a detailed consideration of the nature of these states, including questions of causality, creation and self-knowledge. Like the woman who is looking for her necklace but finds that she is wearing it, 'all our efforts to attain liberation are superfluous. What can be gained is simply the knowledge that we are already free.' There is no creation, no seeker, no liberation, only Brahman. We are already That. Such is the wealth of detail in the book that it is aimed at the advanced seeker and as such represents a considerable achievement of scholarship.

Plotinus on the Soul**Damian Caluori***Cambridge 2015, 222 pp., £64.99, h/b.*

One of my most treasured books is two-volume edition of Dean Inge's Gifford Lectures on Plotinus, and it is perhaps a sign of modern scholarship that his name does not appear in the index or bibliography. Inge approached the subject as much from a spiritual as a philosophical point of view, while here the approach is more philosophical and based on a fairly recent PhD. The reader is taken back to intellectual climate of the third century A.D., influenced by Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, all of whom had their own particular understandings of the soul. In their own way, along with Plotinus, they were concerned with questions of unity and multiplicity, as one appreciates Plotinus' key categories of the One, the Intellect and the Soul. A central theme is his notion of the hypostasis Soul, introduced as a new entity that is neither a Form nor the soul of an individual. The sense of wholeness and unity pervades his whole philosophy and one should recollect that Plotinus was a mystic as well as a philosopher. We ourselves face both inwards and outwards to the intelligible and sensible worlds, in a sense those of being and becoming. Since Descartes, it is interesting to observe that the notions of soul and life have come apart, partly because we now assert what used to be called the rational soul and not the animal or vegetable souls, unless you are part of the new animism. Perhaps the most arresting idea from Plotinus is that the soul is not in the body, but rather the body in the soul, which is then explained technically through different forms of 'being in'. This book enables readers to understand these subtle ways in which word soul was understood by the ancients and the same time as realising how much richer their spiritual understanding was than the impoverished materialism of today.

Ten Basic Principles of Temenos**John Carey***Temenos Academy 2015, 67 pp., no price given (www.temenosacademy.org)*

As some readers will be aware, the Temenos Academy was founded by the poet Kathleen Raine, who had an extensive correspondence with the Prince of Wales, who is President of the Academy and who himself embodies these principles. They originally appeared as editorial pieces in the Temenos Review and are beautifully explained here in a way that can be adopted more generally as a spiritual outlook. These include an acknowledgement of divinity, love of wisdom as the essential basis of civilisation, spiritual vision, maintenance of sacred traditions in continual renewal, a high standard of teaching and the awareness that students will want to apply these principles in their own lives, and reminding themselves and those they teach to look up not down. This last principle relates to the vertical dimension that the Network also seeks to acknowledge.

Son of God, Son of the Sun**Savitri Devi***Creative Fire Press 2015, 195 pp., no price given, p/b.*

Subtitled 'The life and philosophy of Akhenaten, King of Egypt', this is a new edition of a book first published in 1946. Few readers will have heard of Akhenaten, but he was clearly a remarkable man (his wife was Nefertiti) - having ascended the throne at the age of 13, he died at 29 in 1353 BC. The book characterises him the first individual in the modern sense - as a poet, philosopher and visionary prefiguring enlightened monarchs of later periods. The book has a hagiographical tone and much of the analysis is derived from the beautiful Hymns to Aten (the Sun), which unites in his mind light with love and beauty. A key concept is living in truth, which had practical implications for his politics of nonviolence as well as enjoining a life of sincerity in thought

and action. His philosophy of the unity of life did not permit him to wage war against his neighbours, which contributed to his early demise. His teaching was universal in making the sun a central symbol, which also meant it was a natural rather than dogmatic religion. It must also have been one of the first to encourage individual perfection as the supreme goal. It is certainly illuminating to read about this inspiring monarch - this book revives his inspiration.

The Spiritual Laws**Vicent Guillem***Self-published 2015, 241 pp., no price given - see <http://thespiritualaws.blogspot.com>*

I met the author at a recent conference on death and dying in Spain - he is a biochemist researching the genetic predisposition of cancer at the University of Valencia. Like many SMN members he disagrees with orthodox scientific and religious views of spirituality and sets out to explore the spiritual laws for himself by travelling out of the body and ostensibly interviewing a wise being Isaiah about life, the universe and everything. What makes the book special is the quality of Vicent's analytical and enquiring mind, as he is never satisfied with glib answers, always demanding more detail and clearer examples. The patient Isaiah complies willingly. Vicent is clearly well read in the areas he covers, referring to a number of key texts. The four spiritual laws he discusses are those of evolution (which includes the deep nature of human life), free will, spiritual justice and love. The last is the most important and indeed constitutes the kernel of the book. Here he goes into the nature of egoism and the various limitations and negative qualities that we humans have to overcome if we are to reach a higher state. It is important that we learn to listen to our spiritual intuition. The last chapter sifts out the real teaching of Jesus from the theological accretions and is worth reading in its own right, even if I disagreed with his remarks on the Shroud and Mary Magdalene. The serious spiritual seeker will find encouragement on the path and much food for thought in this insightful book.

Conversations on the Enneagram**Edited by Eleanora Gilbert***Cherry Red Books 2015, 283 pp., £14.99, p/b.*

Some readers will no doubt be familiar with the Enneagram as a nine-fold psychological typology based on the idea that at a very young age we disconnect from the oneness of the universe in a particular way and spend the rest of our lives expressing this loss through a different personality type. Such maps are always useful as exploratory guides to enhance self-understanding. These contributions all come from interviews with Conscious TV and must give the most comprehensive view of the subject from experts in the field. All nine types are discussed on a panel by three people of that type, then there are eight further personal interviews with some of the same people relating to such topics as relationships, business and spiritual liberation. A very useful resource for anyone wanting to go more deeply into this subject.

The Book of Becoming**Ronald Alan Meakin***O Books (John Hunt) 2015, 391 pp., £18.99, p/b.*

The author took up the study of philosophy and shamanism later in life and has been retired from the construction industry since 2010. This book shows that he has put his time to excellent use with a wide-ranging study of some of the most fundamental themes in philosophy as indicated by the subtitle: why there is something rather than nothing - a metaphysics of esoteric consciousness. His point of departure is a deep understanding of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus and the way its principles have

been worked out. The first part explores the nature and structure of the cosmos and consciousness based on the Hermetic distinction between the subtle and material realms and their interaction. Each chapter helpfully summarises the story so far, which includes the role of the creative *vis formatrix* or formative principle that is also expressed in the law of attraction where the inside becomes the outside. In this overall process, death plays an important creative role in evolution as the many possible forms of the One are made manifest as co-creation. The universe is a realm of interaction and self-regulation whose bedrock is consciousness. Evolution is a basic form of self-becoming but our challenge is whether we can evolve rapidly enough to resolve the difficulties of our own making. In this respect, the interaction of the subtle and the material as realised by individual human beings is crucial. This opens up the possibility of a concentration of goodness in the creation of a unified planetary environment based on Gaian principles. This in turn depends on how many of us can wake up – in which process this book is an important signpost.

In the Absence of Human Beauty

Matthew Alun Ray

Iff Books (John Hunt) 2015, 83 pp., £7.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'philosophical fragments' – an apt description of the episodic and at times gnomic content - this book sounds rather like Wittgenstein in opening with the sentence that 'It is not that our search for satisfaction has its limits, but that satisfaction is *itself* a limit.' Later on the same page we have 'that which is *now* no longer exists. It never did.' Neither of these two fragments has an accompanying commentary, which is the case with many of the others, and mystics would certainly disagree with the second statement. In the course of these explorations, many of which are devoted to the theme of the Other, the author engages with Heidegger, Schopenhauer, Levinas, Nietzsche and others. In bridging the gap (p. 38), Ray feels that non-conceptual experience or feeling is more important than knowledge; and between the philosophical musings are other fragments of the life of a couple wrestling with some of the same issues, as well as with language. There are many stimulating lines of thought for philosophically minded readers.

Kindling the Native Spirit

Denise Linn

Hay House 2015, 209 pp., £12.99, p/b.

There is a good deal of general interest in indigenous spirituality, which is reflected in this book of sacred practices from a number of traditions – the author herself is a Cherokee on her mother's side who is widely travelled. Her own journey began with an NDE following an episode where someone shot her while she was riding a motorbike. In this book she also describes a dream where the spirit of a local lake came to her bemoaning that it had lost its 'tules', reeds surrounding the lake that are a critical part of the local ecosystem. The following morning, she performed a ceremony honouring the lake and this eventually led to her to buying some adjacent land. The book explains how we can become an 'Earthkeeper', living in harmony with the land, elements and seasons. Denise also gives instructions on making sacred objects and conducting ceremonies – these may release powerful energies so care is required. Accompanying the book are some beautifully produced Native Spirit Oracle Cards that can be used for divination.

The Upside Down Mountain

Mags MacKean

O Books (John Hunt), 2015, 202 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Mags MacKean is a former BBC journalist turned intrepid explorer of both outer and inner realms as she sets off on shamanic journeys to the Pyrenees, the Amazon, Tibet and Egypt. The upside down mountain of the title is Bugarach, a sacred mountain less than an hour from where I live and am writing this. The principal theme is descent – into the realms of the body, buried feelings and the dark unconscious. Mags points out that none of us can escape descent in the form of grief, illness and death, uncomfortable features of the wholeness of life that require and elicit our utmost determination and courage. I have only one experience so far of Bugarach, where the oldest rock is on top – hence the characterisation of the upside down mountain with its own powerful sense of presence that has drawn seekers of all kinds, some a good deal wackier than others. The weather conditions often mirror the writer's internal moods reflected in her powerful and evocative prose describing the transformative process way beyond the comfort zone of most readers but which can potentially take them to their own edge.

Paradise and Promises

Marlowe Sand

O Books (John Hunt) 2015, 255 pp., £15.99, p/b.

This powerful narrative about being a student of Andrew Cohen for 15 years takes the reader on a poignant, sometimes ecstatic and often painful journey 'from love and liberation to painful alienation and, finally disillusionment.' The opening scene is indicative: three women are up to their waist in freezing water where they are expected to remain – as a punishment – for an hour. It is an incredible scene for our time, especially as the women intone one of Cohen's mantras, face everything and avoid nothing. He promised freedom, enlightenment and the destruction of the ego, emphasising impersonality. There is no doubt about his charisma and the heightened states experienced by the author and others, but it drew them into a mesh of manipulative hierarchy and subservient dependence where people give away their power and lose their internal locus of control. They experience feelings of guilt, doubt and inadequacy and become afraid of rejection. All this makes it hard to leave, especially as they are cut off from their families, who think they have been brainwashed.

In Marlowe's case, this involved breaking up with her husband (seen then as liberation) and taking her children on the journey. As you can imagine, this has a profound effect on them, which Marlowe only fully realises at a later stage. At the end of the book she fully understands how exactly the Cohen movement exhibits the standard characteristics of cults – the power structure, unquestioning commitment to the leader, mind-altering practices, elitism, us vs them, shame and guilt used to manipulate members, socialising only with group members. In 2013 the group was effectively disbanded and Cohen is still on sabbatical from teaching. If I compare Marlowe's story with my own, I can recognise some features – my parents thought me brainwashed when I took up meditation with the Brahma Kumaris, and likewise my association with Aivanhov and Peter Deunov. Group members are encouraged to think of themselves as special and families do not take kindly to being put in second place. However, what seemed missing from Cohen was the love that should be at the centre of any spiritual group worthy of the name. They did have a good outward-facing programme in London and I liked and respected the people I met there. Although this is the narrative of one person, it can still serve as an important cautionary tale as we try to navigate between social conformity in a materialistic culture and the draw of a fulfilling spiritual path of service and growth.

PSYCHOLOGY-CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

Emotion

Carolyn Price

Polity 2015, 199 pp., £15.99, p/b.

This introductory text gives readers a very good overview of academic work on emotion with vivid illustrations that can help readers relate the content to their own lives. The introduction sketches the book and immediately plunges the reader into the debate while defining emotional responses, episodes and attitudes. Four theories of emotion are explored initially: William James on emotions as bodily feelings, Robert Solomon on emotions as judgements, Peter Goldie on emotions as complex processes, and Jesse Prinz coming back to bodily feelings. Each of these views is discussed and contrasted, with limitations identified. This leads into a definition of emotion in terms of coherence and function and a deeper exploration of the nature of emotions. The next two chapters delve into emotional evaluations initiating our emotional responses, followed by a discussion of the relationship between emotion and rationality, and the manipulation of emotion. The author's own approach is 'teleosemantic', which states that facts about intentional content are ultimately about the causal properties of intentional states. At the end of the book, readers have a much better understanding of ways in which our emotional responses relate to our values, likes and needs and the extent to which these are authentic.

Emotion and Imagination

Adam Morton

Polity 2015, 230 pp., £14.99, p/b.

This book is more slanted towards moral psychology than the nature of emotions as such, arguing for the close connection between emotion and imagination, even in everyday instances where we conjure up alternative representations, especially in trying to decide a course of action or resolve a challenge. The author usefully keeps mood and emotion distinct, characterising emotion by a certain form of inner pressure. The second part brings up vile emotions and discusses imagining various points of view. He coins the word 'memotions' for moral emotions, discussing their variety and multiple points of view. The last part explores families of emotions, for instance shame, regret, embarrassment and remorse. There is a particularly good discussion of smugness as one of the dangers of people who think of themselves as moral. People may disapprove not only of your actions, but also your accompanying moral emotions. The author sees the other side of smugness as self-respect and decency – the first seen from the outside and the second from the inside. Ultimately, imaginative skill means not only understanding how things seem from others' points of view but also points of view these others are imagining and structuring their emotions around, which entails imagining their imagination.

Molecular Memories

Robert G. Jahn and Brenda J. Dunne

ICRL Press 2015, 119 pp., \$12, p/b.

Bob Jahn and Brenda Dunne are well-known for their work at the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) lab between 1979 and 2007. This book tells the story of the partnership and the results that reshaped our understanding of PK and other phenomena. If Bob is the particle, Brenda is the complementary wave that produces a unified system. The book will be of interest to all those who know about this work, and it was intriguing to learn that they deliberately avoided the term paranormal in formulating their name. Amusingly, when the lab closed in 2007, the University was bombarded with enquiries about why they had closed it down, which they had not. Nevertheless, the lab met with a lot of scepticism

from colleagues. The underlying purpose was to bring science and spirit together and address essential questions about the nature of life and reality. As the reader can imagine, they have travelled considerably during their collaboration, and there are some nice recollections in this regard.

How to Become a Miracle Worker with your Life

Dr Bruno C. Cignacco

O Books 2015, 438 pp., £18.99, p/b.

Some readers may have come across the ancient Hawaiian healing technique of Ho-oponopono involving the four short phrases I am sorry, please forgive me, I love you and thank you. This impressive and very thorough book tells you all you need to know in terms of the principles, procedures and the way that the technique is related to the structure of the mind. The technique was famously used by a certain Dr Len to transform the condition of patients in a psychiatric ward simply by using this form of prayer without even meeting them. Of course, it is controversial to link these two events together, but there does not seem to be any other apparent explanation, given the circumstances. This presupposes a fundamental oneness of mind and interconnectedness of life. An essential component in the book is the effacing of subconscious memories and the removal of psychological blocks on the basis that we are responsible for everything that happens in our lives. The summaries at various points in the book demonstrate the author's profound grasp of the principles of the mind and he gives practical tips for the application of the key aspects, including love, gratitude and inspiration.

Deliberate Receiving

Melody Fletcher

Hay House 2015, 253 pp., £10.99, p/b.

Melody Fletcher is a full-on person, and this is correspondingly a full-on book about working out what you truly want, why you don't have it and what you need to do to order and receive it without getting in your own way. She explains her own background and what she calls the game of life, which is a question of focus, frequency as we realise how life reflects back to us our own feelings, focus and frequency and expectations - all these are forms of energy. She gives a clear five-stage progression of manifestation involving focusing on a choice, feeling an emotion, the emergence of patterns of thought, the appearance of synchronicities and the advent of physical manifestations. She then explains these stages in some detail and how we can sabotage the process through limiting beliefs. These can nevertheless be changed by moving up a spectrum of emotions towards full empowerment. She reminds us that what we really want is a particular emotion or state that we can mistakenly identify with possessions. She also gives a timely reminder that life is not so much happening to us but happening for us. The book is an excellent guide to shifting towards an active view of life based on energy and vibration.

The Transformational Truth of You

Tiffany Crosara

Axis Mundi Books (John Hunt) 2015, 183 pp., £13.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'the magician's journey', this book is about co-creating your life reality and turning loss into transformation, as illustrated through the author's own experience, especially that of losing her young daughter. Each chapter has a corresponding Tarot card heading that illuminates its message, often based on one of life's ironies and synchronicities. The purpose is for readers to tune into their depths and to face their own truth by understanding the deeper reality of their life experiences. It is also important to balance the function of the ego, develop trust in life and harmonise head and heart. There is a good exercise to work out one's values and align one's actions to the highest good. Readers can also learn from the author's own 'mistakes' and the lessons she drew from them.

Energizing Love

Phil Cheney

Christian Alternative (John Hunt) 2015, 235 pp., £14.99, p/b.

This book is about UILE, or Universal Intentional Love Energy where, fortuitously, the acronym is the old Irish for all or whole. The book provides a roadmap for accessing this energy in life and removing the obstacles to it. We can only change ourselves and must discover our own path or philosophy. Phil uses the neologism *philosophie* to denote the direction of travel. Dreams can be an important gateway into a wider imaginative awareness, and he provides guidance along the way in terms of altering our patterns of thought and feeling and reaching a deeper level of enjoyment. However, pain, sorrow and grief can also turn out to be the seeds of later joy. He recommends a balanced life where we choose love as our centre of gravity and remain alert to the present moment. This also means being authentic and acting in love. He is right about the education system lacking an underlying model of the human being and assuming, wrongly, that knowledge is what we need to succeed. He adds: 'it does not know how to teach virtues, spirit and friendship, and ways to interpret what is ethical life instead of pushing the materialism barrow.' Ultimately, we do have our own universal spiritual GPS, and this book is a timely reminder of this fact.

Body Calm

Sandy C. Newbigging

Hay House 2015, 266 pp., £10.99, p/b.

It is arresting to read that 70% of Americans take at least one prescription drug while more than 50% take two; and in the UK, there were 22 million prescriptions for paracetamol in 2014. This book encourages us to stop stressing and start resting so that we can help our body to harmonise and heal. The less we are caught up in our busy minds, the more rest our bodies can obtain; it also helps to be present and aware in the moment. The book is clearly set out with excellent summaries at the end of each chapter. *Body Calm* can enhance contentment, confidence, loving relationships, present moment living and freedom. Newbigging characterises his technique with the acronym GAAWO - gently alert awareness wide open - that disengages the thinking mind and allows us to rest in the calm of consciousness. He suggests a number of I am affirmations and focus points in the body (p. 50). In the second part he looks in more detail and uncomfortable emotions, unhealthy beliefs, unforgiven past, resisting the present, unloved body, unheard heart and unawake being. I appreciated the phrase 'courageous contentment', where few people are willing to let their life be enough. In the third part, there are instructions for embodying healthy virtues, followed by a number of directories listing causes of issues relating to body parts, organs, systems, senses and 101 physical conditions. You can find out more about this comprehensive approach at www.sandynewbigging.com.

Synchronicity

Chris Mackey

Watkins Publishing 2015, 259 pp., £9.99, p/b.

The author of this refreshingly honest book is a clinical and counselling psychologist in Australia whose life has been shaped in important ways by synchronicity. He begins by considering approaches to synchronicity both theoretically and from a practical point of view, especially in relation to his own field of mental health. He reports some interesting conversations between Heisenberg and Fritjof Capra on the physics of entanglement. It seems that being open to synchronicity can help it function more effectively in our life. Joseph Jaworski describes some interesting experiences and finds that things flow best when he allows life's forces to move through him without seeking too much control.

We then become more open to change. Marilyn Ferguson's *Aquarian Conspiracy* had a profound effect on him, as it did on me, as he set out to understand synchronicity and enable it in his own life. On the way he recounts some very amusing incidents as illustrations. He has done his fair share of travelling – including to Findhorn – and has more recently become interested in positive psychology and its potential role in creating a positive psychiatry. More generally, he has found intuitive knowing crucial in his life and relates synchronicity to neuroscience through the work of Ernesto Rossi. Overall Chris shows readers how their lives can be empowered through collaboration with the positive forces represented by synchronicity.

Into the Wider Dream

Michael Cocks (SMN)

White Crow Books 2015, 223 pp., £14.95, p/b.

Michael Cocks is an Anglican clergyman from New Zealand, whose previous book was about communications received from St Stephen, which themselves were imbued with synchronicity. Michael covers some of the same ground as Chris Mackey above in his account of synchronicity and the extraordinary wealth of his own experience that he brings to bear on the topic. Some of his dreams contain patterns that later unfold in life itself. His most fundamental question is about the operation of spiritual forces in our lives, of which synchronicity can provide an example. An arresting case is when he picks up a young man in a storm who had been trying to commit suicide as he felt himself unworthy before God but who only two minutes earlier had prayed that a sympathetic person would pick him up. Among the thinkers discussed, apart from Jung, are Bohm, Pribram, LeShan and Peat. Maybe underpinning the phenomenon is the One Mind and the ways in which our outer life mirrors our inner – themes almost entirely ignored by academic psychology taught in universities. One sequence of synchronicities is connected to UFOs and another to the moon goddess. The author's technique of typing a question in and intuiting an answer – sometimes a poem with a page reference – is quite fascinating in terms of the results yielded for very different types of question. He concludes that synchronistic experiences act as a window into wider dimensions of meaning and consciousness, encouraging us to trust the unfolding of life – and patterns that connect.

Mindfulness in Motion

Dr Tamara Russell

Watkins Publishing 2015, 144 pp., £12.99, p/b.

The author of this beautifully produced book is a clinical psychologist, martial artist, neuroscientist and teacher of mindfulness, all of which disciplines are reflected in this book. She describes a body centred meditation as a form of secular mindfulness so as to get out of your head and into your body. The five keys are pausing, intention, attention, self understanding and compassion. Each of these is clearly explained, with illustrations, diagrams and instructions. As with all such books, the key is the practice itself rather than just reading about it. The reader gains a deeper understanding of the topics discussed and practical insights for their own development. Slowing down can be a real challenge, but it enables us to connect growth with our body and the environment. I enjoyed the variations on the monkey mind including the daydreaming monkey, the judging monkey, the comparing monkey, the planning monkey, the should monkey and the analytical monkey - these are all present within us but we can become more aware of these mental and also emotional patterns. The book is laid out so that the reader can follow it sequentially, culminating in the loving kindness compassion meditation. At the end, reader is encouraged to go back to the beginning and start again.

Positively Smarter**Marcus Conyers and Donna Wilson***Wiley Blackwell 2015, 230 pp., £17.99, p/b.*

This handbook on science and strategies for increasing happiness, achievement and well-being is packed full of constructive advice set out in a readable and accessible fashion. The starting point is brain plasticity as a key to redefining potential. The first chapter maps this out by showing how we can all improve our knowledge and abilities through our thinking and actions, for instance the health benefits of weightlifting in middle and old age. They contrast the innate talent paradigm with the untapped potential paradigm, which they build on for the rest of the book. They cover the role of thinking, smart goals, working smarter, social well-being, bodily health, nutrition and exercise, and conclude with a chapter bringing seven principles together. At the end there are helpful charts to keep readers on track. The overall approach is very grounded and practical with a minimum of fluff and a great deal of sound advice.

Between Mind and Brain**Ronald Britton***Karnac Books 2015, 141 pp., £19.99, p/b.*

Subtitled 'models of the mind and models in the mind', this book builds a conceptual bridge between the psychoanalytic concept of mind and mind as understood in science within a wide frame of reference including philosophy and literature. He quotes Bertrand Russell to the effect that every writer on philosophy has a concealed and unconscious metaphysics as an uncritically believed system underlying his specific arguments. This applies to any discipline with a theoretical underpinning. The author sees psychoanalysis as a natural history of the mind that draws not just on psychology but also biology, philosophy and literature (he discusses Wordsworth, Milton and Blake) as well as kinship groups with shared beliefs. He sees the task of the analyst as becoming more aware of the unconscious models inhabiting the minds of their patients while at the same time becoming more aware of those models that shape their own theorising. In other words, being open to change and learning from experience. This book will be of most interest to philosophically minded analysts.

ECOLOGY-FUTURES STUDIES**Glaciers – the Politics of Ice****Jorge Daniel Taillant***Oxford 2015, 334 pp., \$29.95, h/b.*

This book breaks new ground - or should I say ice - in bringing the vulnerability of glaciers to the general reading public. The author has been involved as a 'cryoactivist', based at the Centre for Human Rights and Environment in Argentina where his partner was for some time the Environment Secretary while the parliament was trying to pass the first protective legislation for glaciers. So the book weaves together in alternate chapters science, geography and politics of ice. The reader soon realises how important glaciers are in our ecosystem, especially as water towers that are both cyclic and renewable as the ice accumulates and disperses on a seasonal basis. Three quarters of our freshwater originates in the high mountains, which makes the erosion of glaciers a serious issue. For instance, in Montana, the number is reduced from 150 in 1850 to 25 now.

The politics of implementing the first glacier legislation were complex. The parliament passed legislation unanimously, but a call to the president from the president of Garrick Gold ensured that she vetoed the legislation at the last minute, and blamed the environment secretary for not realising

how much resistance the legislation would create in the mining industry, thus highlighting the tension between jobs and economic growth on the one hand and environmental protection on the other. The last straw was being asked to contribute to a legal position justifying veto of the glacier law, which she herself had formulated. The political shenanigans were pretty disgraceful in this case, but a revised law was eventually passed. Given the importance of glaciers and their susceptibility to climate change, they deserve to be well up the agenda, and this highly readable book can provide an authoritative reference point for this process.

A Future World Vision**Richard Smith***Vital Signs 2015, 270 pp., £9.95, p/b – www.vitalsignspublishing.co.uk*

One of the interesting aspects of this informative and wide-ranging book is its historical perspective on reform, going back to French revolution and dividing the time since then into 43 year periods where one becomes aware of the reforming timeline and the major political advances that have been made since that time. Unfortunately, these seem to have gone into reverse over the last 15 years with the war on terror encouraging us to trade in our freedom for a somewhat illusory security so that the existing war machine economy can be perpetuated. The six central concerns of this book are freedom, education, reform, technology, humanism and world government, though not through the New World Order. Our communication systems give us a means of reinventing democracy, which is already happening through widespread online petitions. An important underlying theme is the author's encouragement to shift from becoming to being. In this respect he identifies six principal considerations connected with responsibility at every level, proper education, consideration of the consequences of technical innovation and recognition of the need for genuine reform. The author makes many constructive suggestions in the course of discussing the major issues facing humanity today, including resources, world population and the need for coordinated governance. The real issue seems to me that we know what best to do but not how to bring it about, as these actions will certainly not be taken by our elected representatives. However, it would be a start if more people were aware of what is really going on and the ways in which we are manipulated by those in authority and the press. Richard provides a useful handbook, and the next step is to work out in more detail how this new vision can be implemented and what role we as individuals can take.

From Field to Fork**Paul B. Thompson***Oxford 2015, 329 pp., \$21.95, p/b.*

Subtitled 'Food ethics for everyone', this must be the most comprehensive and accessible book on the topic by someone who is both highly informed and sympathetic to different approaches and philosophies. As he shows, our food choices are embedded in agricultural, social and economic systems with multiple ramifications related to food production, processing, distribution and consumption. He sees the overall context as one of constraints on conduct that nevertheless lead to certain identifiable consequences; this process also includes a learning cycle. The book covers the full spectrum of food ethics issues while also giving the reader an overall historical understanding. There are chapters on social injustice, diet and obesity, persistent hunger, livestock welfare and the ethics of producing meat, local food systems and environmental impact, green revolution through technology and the controversy over GMOs and herbicide resistance.

In discussing these last issues, I think the author rightly identifies a philosophical divide between conventional industrial agriculture, including biotechnology, and what he

calls an agrarian and more organic perspective. For industry, food is just one more product, while agrarian systems focus on sustainability and interpersonal connections. In discussing obesity, the author draws out the complexities of various strands of argument and especially the focus on individual moral responsibility and choice, which the food industry uses in its favour. Obesogenic choices can arguably impose costs on other people. The question of ethical vegetarianism is raised at a number of junctures but also set within very different cultural contexts. The author conducts a very thorough analysis of the arguments for and against genetic biotechnology and its claim to be necessary for feeding the world. He looks at the case against in terms of precaution, social justice, naturalness and choice, and virtue ethics. Having been involved in various dimensions himself, he advocates a less confrontational and more cooperative approach. He looks at the writings of Vandana Shiva and the experiments of Seralini in a sympathetic but critical light, questioning some of their logic but recognising their legitimate concerns. Readers wishing to get to grips with the multiple aspects of food ethics will find this an excellent and accessible starting point.

Environmental Change and the World's Futures

Edited by Jonathan Paul Marshall and Linda H. Connor

Earthscan 2015, 286 pp., £90, h/b.

This collection investigates the changing socially-based perceptions of uncertain futures through the lenses of ecologies, ontologies and mythologies from a variety of cultural perspectives involving different ways of understanding. The main themes are intellectual and speculative engagements with ecological change, the politics of engagement, environmental change in specific places and cultures, body and psyche, and technological mythology. While climate change looms large in the global context, for farmers in Nepal the most important immediate factor is the quality of the soil. Governance is considered in relation to management of tuna fisheries and Jungian psychology is brought to bear on death and apocalyptic visions. I found two of the most interesting essays by Marshall, the first on ecological complexity and ethics of disorder where I was surprised to find an extensive discussion of the ethics of Albert Schweitzer, who recognised the importance of an ethical attitude in the face of the uncertainty and disorder of the natural world. We ourselves are participants in a larger process that cannot simply be controlled. This theme of control reappears in the second essay on geo-engineering within current free market cultural complex where it is supposed that it is easier to control the natural world than to change society - an attitude subjected to more radical criticism in the book immediately below. Formulating issues in terms of problems invites thinking in terms of solutions or avoidance through imagining. It is indeed questionable whether the free market can resolve all the challenges created by itself, since it privileges its own particular structure of thinking.

Systems Thinking for Geoengineering Policy

Robert Chris

Earthscan 2015, 211 pp., £90, h/b.

Few people will be aware of number of high-profile reports that have been written on geoengineering, including by the Royal Society, the U.S. House committee on science and technology, the UK House of Commons science and technology and technology committee and the fifth IPCC report, all of which conclude that geo-engineering research should be considered and possibly initiated. It is also supported by high profile individuals such as Bill Gates and Richard Branson and in the first instance may be linked to similar support for GM technology that claims to overcome

adverse weather patterns (that may even be exacerbated by use of geo-engineering – see www.geoengineeringwatch.com). In common with a number of other books in this series, Chris is critical of linear and reductionist methodologies while advocating a systems approach in the face of uncertainty and failure. He gives an initial review of variants and risks of geo-engineering, principally solar radiation management (SRM) and carbon dioxide removal (CDR), covering questions of how long aerosols stay in the atmosphere and implications for the termination of such a policy - which would result in an acceleration of global temperatures. Controversially, some people attribute a global cooling effect to spraying already carried out but officially denied.

The philosophical heart of the book is a critique of the limits of reductionism with its reliance on determinism and prediction, resulting in either providing or controlling. A systems perspective exposes the naivete of such outdated thinking, especially with respect to so-called wicked problems. Systems thinking inherently recognises uncertainty, risk and surprise as well as the complexities arising in policy-making about geo-engineering. The author argues that complex adaptive systems (CAS) theory is better suited to address our situation, while reframing it not as a solution but rather as a contribution to an overall policy approach. This is certainly more reassuring than the conventional model but not without its risks as we do not know the long-term effects of this type of technology and weather modification. The final chapter proposes a geo-engineering governance network (GGN) as a means of steering the process, the results of which are inevitably intergenerational. There are inherent risks in both action and inaction, so it is important for books like this to lay out the broad picture.

The Sixth Extinction

Elizabeth Kolbert

Bloomsbury 2015, 319 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This compelling and highly readable book won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for general non-fiction, which will not surprise the reader. The sixth extinction of the title is the current one of the Anthropocene era brought about by ourselves. The background rate of natural extinction is very low, which highlights our current situation as measured in various different ways. The structure of the book entails field reporting on a number of endangered species and environments, interwoven with the fascinating history of how thinking on extinctions evolved. Cuvier was the first to study this in detail and to conclude that cataclysms had taken place. He disagreed with Lamarck and his 'transformisme', while Lamarck rejected the cataclysm theory. This reflects later debates in biology. Kolbert also discusses the influence of Lyell on Darwin, whose theory of natural selection was gradualist. One chapter focuses on ocean acidification - oceans absorb one third of CO2 emissions. It also looks as if global warming may lead to extinction of up to a quarter of species by 2050 - the lowest estimates are between 9% and 13%. The overall message is that extinction events of the magnitude we are creating are very rare in the history of the Earth - and it was striking how human centred the final communiqué from Paris was - personally I saw no reference to loss of biodiversity. The main concern for market economies is cost and opportunity cost. Action on the biodiversity front should surely also be high on our priorities.

EDUCATION

Joining the Resistance

Carol Gilligan

Polity 2015, 192 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Carol Gilligan is famous for the research she conducted on adolescent girls, which resulted in her book *In a Different Voice* that showed up the limitations of her colleague Lawrence Kohlberg's research on moral development where he had only considered boys. More recent research has validated that we are by nature responsive and relational beings, hardwired for empathy and cooperation – she adds that our capacity for mutual understanding may well be key to our survival as a species. Even at a panel in 2010, this contention was contradicted by two distinguished academics, who took the view that we are by nature competitive and aggressive. This viewpoint is embedded in the very patriarchal splits that Gilligan analyses and which make us think that an ethic of care is feminine rather than more generally human.

Adolescent girls are still faced with the feeling of being pressed to choose between having a voice and having relationships. Related to this is her finding that the power of the opposition between selfishness and selflessness was a huge factor in shaping women's moral judgements and choices. In two places she quotes some perceptive remarks by Anne Frank reflecting on heroism and war and saying that 'women are much braver, much more courageous soldiers, struggling and enduring pain for the continuance of humankind, than all the freedom fighting heroes with their big mouths!' She concludes that the ethic of care is integral to the struggle to release democracy from the grip of patriarchy, encouraging the capacities that constitute our humanity.

The 21st Century and Cancer Research

Robert Pope (SMN) and Robert Todonai

Science-Art Research Centre 2015, 137 pp., no price given.

This book is an illustrated compendium of the work that the authors have been doing over a 40-year period at the interface between science and art. The central themes recur in different contexts throughout the book and there are some important starting points such as the fact that Newton himself denied that the first cause was mechanical. The scientific emphasis on entropy and chaos leads to what the authors call a carcinogenic worldview, which they reject in favour of emerging order through quantum biology. They seek instead a science with an ethical purpose, wisdom through beauty, information infused with inspiration. In this respect, the colour theories of Goethe are significant, as is what they call the golden age of Danish science based on the work of Oersted and the formulation of a creative physics. The fine paintings throughout the book can be viewed in 3-D using a special pair of spectacles provided. Some unusual connections and juxtapositions are made, including the elements in the title as exhibitions are mounted in support of cancer research, although it is not clear what kind of research is funded. Readers can consult the Centre website on www.science-art.com.au

GENERAL

Journey of Light

Pat Fok

Assouline 2015, 300 pp., no price given

I reviewed Pat Fok's *Enchanted Light* here when it came out in 2011. Her new book is an equally exquisite production on the finest paper and in itself a work of extraordinary beauty and care. Pat learned her craft with Ansel Adams and explains her philosophy of life of living in and capturing the moment (often of stillness) with her camera. This reveals a knowledge of the heart, which Carl Jung says can only be obtained by living fully. Her travels have taken her to many sacred and remote places and her photos convey the beauty and harmony of nature, statues and buildings. Each photo has a simple commentary that recalls her journey and feelings. They invite the reader into a contemplative state of mind to accompany her images.

There are holy people as well as sacred places and simple portraits – I was struck by her photo of a simple woman with her son: their open smiles spoke volumes. Some images from 30 years ago recall a time before cable cars and tourist infrastructure brought in crowds of people. The last part recaps some images from the exhibition and book *Enchanted Light* and through the extraordinary light phenomena depicted the question arises of what is so-called inner and outer reality and how the former is reflected in the latter. There are photos of transparent bodies, light emanating from holy people, another body rising out of the first and many other orbs and patterns of light not visible to the naked eye – for instance dancing energy patterns criss-crossing a young Daoist master. Readers will appreciate how photography teaches one to live in the moment and to connect with the beauty of our planet. Pat also connects these light phenomena in her photos with her open heart so that 'occasionally the land unfolds its secrets and heaven its light, allowing me to gaze into its mystery'. This extraordinary volume allows the reader to take a parallel journey into the mystical beauty of landscape and light.

By Steppe, Desert and Ocean – the Birth of Eurasia

Sir Barry Cunliffe

Oxford 2015, 530 pp., £30, h/b.

This is a book on a grand scale in every sense of the word. By taking a geographical territory as wide as Eurasia, stretching from Europe to China, and a historical sweep from 10,000 BC, the author paints on a vast canvas while managing to maintain a thematic continuity throughout the book. One interesting visual factor is that Europe appears in the top left-hand corner of the overall map, giving it an unusual angle. The title refers to the main channels of connectivity and mobility between areas that in time became empires involving movement of people, armies and trade in a vast interconnected global system that arose between 250 BC and 250 A.D. The large number of maps conveys the dynamics of empires and exchanges while the narrative describes demographic pressures on natural environments so that one understands that our current situation is a globalised picture of the same trend of overexploitation.

The author's view is shaped by his discipline of archaeology, and it would have been interesting if he had made a few references and comparisons to the work of Arnold Toynbee, whose *Study of History* covers some of the same ground. What makes the story particularly fascinating is the way in which the book alternates discussion of different geographical areas so that a passage on China is juxtaposed with a corresponding history of Persia or Rome. One gets a particularly vivid impression of the rise and fall of empires and the role played by predatory nomads. His analysis ends in 1300, while briefly mentioning the devastating effects of

the Black Death. He identifies a number of critical thresholds, including the domestication of the horse, the interaction between pastoralists of the steppe zone and more settled agricultural states, and the establishment of long-distance trading networks. One particularly striking illustration shows that Zheng He's 1402 junk at 1500 tonnes was five times the size of the ship used by Vasco da Gama to sail round the Cape of Good Hope 60 years later. The book is an epic journey, beautifully illustrated and engagingly written that will surely attain classic status.

The Future of the Professions

Richard and Daniel Susskind

Oxford 2015, 346 pp., £18.99, h/b.

It is a sign of the times that more people signed up for Harvard's online courses in a single year than have attended the University in its 377-year history. Knowledge and expertise is now increasingly available online, and people are migrating there for information. In the same way, there are more unique visits each month to the Web MD network than to all the doctors working in the US. In the context of this book, health and education are two of eight professions examined in some detail, the others being divinity, law, journalism, management consulting, tax and audit, and architecture. The fundamental issue is how best to share expertise. Traditionally, this has been through expert professionals requiring extensive training and regulation making up a 'grand bargain' whereby money is traded for expertise.

The authors look at individual as well as general trends, with an emphasis on transformation by technology through increasingly capable systems that can replace some human functioning. The second part looks at the changing relationship between information and technology (automation and innovation, for instance), as well as the production and distribution of knowledge in the context of increasingly connected humans. They see the possibility of the decomposition of individual tasks within the professions so that one can assess whether these are best carried out by humans or technology. They address potential objections and anxieties to their thesis but conclude that the case for liberating rather than enclosing professional knowledge is very strong, especially if one adopts John Rawls' 'veil of ignorance' and does not know the role one would play in society. The study is exceptionally well informed and important contribution to thinking about the future of professional work.

The Country of First Boys

Amartya Sen

Oxford 2015, 276 pp., £14.99, h/b.

Amartya Sen is an extraordinary thinker, a Nobel laureate in economics who has an incredible 100 honorary degrees from universities around the world. Many of these essays were first published in an Indian literary magazine, and they examine through a lens of social justice many fundamental issues including deprivation, inequality, hunger, illiteracy, globalisation, freedom of speech, injustice and exclusion. I learned that Nalanda University was founded some 600 years before the oldest university in Europe, Bologna. Indeed, it had already been destroyed before the founding of Cambridge (where Sen was Master of Trinity) in 1209. There is now a project to revive it. On the theme of injustice, Sen takes a pragmatic rather than idealistic approach, preferring practical prevention rather than grand schemes.

Although he points out that democracy in India has prevented famine, he is critical of the Indian government approach of subsidising food prices and maintaining grain reserves rather than making more food available to the destitute. There is a very interesting essay on Tagore where Sen gives the reader a different picture of the man from the mystical

image conveyed to the West by Yeats and illustrates his points by highlighting some of his differences with Gandhi. He also wonders why he has been relatively neglected in the West, although Dartington and others did mark the 150th anniversary of his birth. Apparently Tagore announced his Nobel to a meeting connected with school drains by remarking that 'there would probably be money to cover the expense.' Sen offers a humane and wise perspective on many global challenges.

What is Intellectual History?

Richard Whatmore

Polity Press 2015, 137 pp., £14.99, p/b.

This subject covers such a wide interdisciplinary field that it almost defies definition and is associated in the popular mind primarily with philosophy and political thought. Ideas are historical forces that both shape and are shaped by societies and history. This book acts as a primer to the field, covering as it does the identity, history, method, practice and relevance of intellectual history. It discusses a vast range of thinkers including Rousseau, Hume, Sir Isaiah Berlin, Arthur Lovejoy, RG Collingwood, Quentin Skinner and John Pocock. It will be of particular interest to readers engaged with the history of ideas.

The Enlightenment – a Very Short Introduction

John Robertson

Oxford 2015, 147 pp., £7.99, p/b.

Understanding the Enlightenment is a key aspect of our intellectual and cultural history, which this book does superbly, not only in terms of the 18th century and its legacy, but also more recent cultural history. Otherwise called the Age of Reason, it questioned established authorities - both religious and political - while holding a vision of the betterment of mankind, which has had a huge influence since that time. I liked Kant's definition that the Enlightenment is the freedom to make public use of one's reason with the goal of liberating mankind from its self-imposed immaturity. Arguably, this trend goes too far when closely aligned with philosophical materialism. The author deals with three main areas: engaging with religion, bettering the human condition in social, economic and political respects, and enlightening the public. He draws on a vast range of thinkers including Gibbon, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Hume, Smith and Rousseau, reminding readers what a shock his essay on inequality created in the culture of the time by equating modern developments with corruption and praising the noble savage. Among the important social features of the 18th century were coffee houses, Freemasonry, new learned societies and the salons presided over by formidable women. The wide availability of print helped circulate these new ideas more widely and many of the leading figures to part in university reform with the emergence of more specialist disciplines. A richly rewarding read.

Mountains – a Very Short Introduction

Martin F. Price

Oxford 2015, 134 pp., £7.99, p/b.

Among other appointments he holds, Martin Price has a UNESCO chair in sustainable mountain development. In this book you will find out how much there is to know about mountains that you never suspected. Two of the chapters indicate their content with the titles 'the world's water towers' and 'centres of diversity'. They have also become tourist destinations, a trend that started in the mid-19th century with people like Sir Leslie Stephen taking their students to the Alps during the summer. It is interesting to learn that 100m in height is an equivalent change to moving 100 miles towards a pole and that mountains cover 24% of the Earth's land surface. Agriculture on mountains has to

be undertaken on terraces and can benefit from an agro-ecological approach. Mountains have to be protected in order to preserve their appeal and natural features, but the scale of human impact is still considerable: 12 tons of excrement are collected yearly from the Everest base camp and 23 tons of waste was found in 2013 along a 53 kilometre route on Mt Kailash. The effect of climate change on mountains is plain to see, and there is a photo of the author in the Morteratsch Valley in Switzerland where the glacier has retreated by 1 kilometre in his lifetime. The book conveys a vivid impression of the many ways in which mountains are important to us.

The Calm Center

Steve Taylor (SMN)

New World Library 2015, 109 pp., \$17, p/b.

This book is part of the new Eckhart Tolle Editions and is introduced by him. For Tolle, how religious you are depends on the depth of your beliefs while spirituality is indicated by your degree of presence (also being present in the moment – the power of now). These poems, as he says, have as their ultimate subject the reader's state of consciousness. Many of the titles are indicative: The Voice inside your Head, Divine Dissatisfaction, The Alchemy of Attention, The Pressure to Do, A Moment without Thought, The Off-Loading, The Perfect Paradox. The themes are familiar to any reader on the spiritual path and the poems encourage you to hold fast, have faith and win through while also commenting on the need for acceptance and surrender at certain points in the process. Above all, there is a sense of a common journey and a reassurance that all will be well despite obstacles and challenges – indeed through these as they enable us to grow and transform. Highly recommended as contemplative reading – a refreshment as well as a stimulus for the soul.

In Their Right Minds

Carole Brooks Platt

Imprint Academic 2015, 201 pp., £14.95, p/b.

Starting from the proposition in 1976 by Julian Jaynes that the language of poetry originated in the right hemisphere, this extensive scientific and literary text confirms the role of the right hemisphere in poetry, sensed presence, inner voices, paranormal claims and also in dissociation and mental imbalance. Enhanced right hemispheres may result from a number of factors or experiences – often childhood trauma and the death of a parent - and may create hypersensitivities as well as special skills, as the author demonstrates with respect to a large number of distinguished poets, including Blake, Keats, Hugo, Rilke, Yeats, Merrill, Plath and Hughes. Other writers include Balzac, Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Dickens, Stevenson and Maupassant. The author also discusses the work of FWH Myers, Brian Weiss and Stan Grof. The scholarship displayed is prodigious and the insights gained at the interface between neuroscience and literature make fascinating reading.

Maria Thun Biodynamic Calendar 2016

Matthias Thun

Floris Books 2015, 64 pp., \$13.95, p/b (US version)

This annual publication is the Bible for biodynamic gardeners and farmers as it gives the best times for sowing and harvesting throughout the yearly cycle. As usual, it contains extra items of interest, this time on old mills and big houses along with some advice on the care of bees including varroa mite. There is also a section on the solar eclipse and a brief discussion of some seeding trials during solar eclipses and other astrological aspects.

When Wine Tastes Best 2016

Matthias Thun

Floris Books 2015, 48 pp., £3.99, p/b.

I think this is the fourth year of this calendar, based on biodynamics and which traces out the best days - fruit and flower, rather than leaf and root - on which to drink wine. The wine merchant David Motion is quoted as saying that the same wines tasted on Tuesday and Thursday were much more expressive on the latter day. I must admit to not yet having tried this out myself, but will do so before the next edition comes out. At the back of the book, there is a brief description of the background of organic and biodynamic, which is becoming increasingly popular in France. One of the great Bordeaux châteaux, Pontet-Canet, has been biodynamic for some years, and vigneroners are beginning to pay more attention to the quality of the soils and the fact that using horses results in less compaction.

Stargazers' Almanac 2016

Bob Mizon

Floris Books 2015, £14.99, large format.

This is an invaluable monthly guide to the stars and planets including a general chart and some basic astronomical information. The structure gives monthly guidance with items of interest and a North and South looking sky on the 15th of the month; also a guide to the phases of the moon. As it happens, last night we were out for a walk with the dog where we can admire Orion rising into the eastern sky and I saw a record number of five meteors. Additional items include light pollution as well as making the most of meteors, which recur on a regular basis. This is a great guide for anyone interested in the night sky.

