books in brief

David Lorimer

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

SCIENCE-PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Alan M. Turing

Sara Turing

Cambridge University Press 2014, 169 pp., £ 9.99, p/b.

This is the centenary edition of the life of Alan Turing written by his mother, with a new foreword and a revealing memoir by his brother. Turing's personality and genius comes across very clearly in these pages, as does his eccentricity - apparent in the number of anecdotes contributed by his friends. He first showed his mathematical ability at Sherborne, using a combination of intuition and ingenuity. In a mathematics prize he was asked, what is the locus of so-and-so, and his answer was that the locus is such and such; this was correct, but the examiners had expected a page and a half of proof. When asked why he had shown no proof, he said that it had not been asked for, but immediately saw it and wrote it down. On another occasion he produced an immediate formula on the lighting of a certain hall, and said he would send the proof in a few days. His mother gives a vivid impression of his characteristics, one of which was taking enormous trouble about finding gifts for people and also being very good with children.

While working during the war on code breaking at Bletchley, he had a bicycle whose chain repeatedly came off (he was in fact a very fine athlete). Rather than take it elsewhere for repair, he worked out how many revolutions of the pedals it was before the chain came off; then he fixed a counter on the bicycle to warn of approaching trouble, following which he discovered the mathematical relation between the number of pedal revolutions, links in the chain and spokes in the wheel. This showed that the chain came off when a slightly damaged link came in contact with a bent spoke - he duly straightened the spoke and had no more trouble. The memoir describes the background of his extraordinary contributions to computer science, mathematics, artificial intelligence and computational biology - and there are two essays on computing machinery and the theory of morphogenesis. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society before he was 40. His brother gives an altogether less flattering portrait, revealing that Alan in fact loathed his mother and had been a practising homosexual since his teens - at the time this was illegal, and he was even given oestrogen injections to try to modify his sex drive. It seems clear that an episode involving a burglary from his house led to the public revelation of his sexual preference and indirectly to his suicide. Since his death, his reputation has only grown, which makes this book all the more interesting reading.

The Altruistic Brain

Donald W. Pfaff

Oxford University Press 2015, 295 pp., £16.99, h/b.

The title of this ground-breaking book begs the question that brains, rather than persons, can be altruistic - is this just a category error? What the book does demonstrate, though, is that brains regulate or at least influence our behaviour according to certain inherently benevolent patterns. We are in fact wired for empathy and goodwill, which is a very significant finding that provides a counterargument to the idea of the selfish gene and indeed of original sin. The author calls this Altruistic Brain Theory (ABT). He explains in some detail the five steps involved in processing altruism: registering the act one is about to perform, picturing the person who will be the target of this act, blurring the image of that person with oneself (a crucial step), feeling into the consequences of the potential act and deciding whether or not to act. Each of these steps takes place below the level of consciousness and is completed in a microsecond.

The rest of the first part introduces ABT in more detail and explains the neuroscience underlying each step as well as the neural and hormonal mechanisms promoting pro-social behaviour such as oxytocin. The author then links his theory to the universality of the golden rule. In the second part, he considers how we can improve performance of the moral brain by removing obstacles to good behaviour. In the first instance, it transforms our perceptions of ourselves and helps create a climate of trust. Nevertheless, this inherent pattern can be overridden by impulses towards violent crime and gang behaviour. He links his theory with the work of Daniel Kahneman on fast and slow thinking, arguing that thinking slow may give benevolent brain mechanisms a chance to work. Here, he could have mentioned the work of Iain McGilchrist and his observation that empathy is associated with the right hemisphere. Towards the end, he draws the interesting conclusion that society should remove obstacles to leadership by women on the grounds that their hormones such as oestrogen and oxytocin operating on circuits in the female brain foster more pro-social and caring behaviour - he therefore calls for the empowerment of women, very much along the lines of Malala. By recognising these benevolent brain patterns, we can correspondingly strengthen them, thus giving more hope for a positive future – a visionary conclusion from a scientific book.

Does Altruism Exist?

David Sloan Wilson

Yale University and Templeton Presses 2015, 180 pp., $27.50, p/b.

Interestingly, although this book also deals with the evolution of altruism, neither author references the other although both stress the centrality of action. The basic argument of this book is that, from an evolutionary viewpoint, altruism is linked to the functional organisation of groups. This makes no reference to individual brain function within these groups, although it is likely that this would be compatible and might even reinforce the argument of both books. The John Templeton Foundation played an important role in the genesis of this book through its programme on Big Questions in science. The word itself was invented by Auguste Comte in 1851, and it is interesting to note, contrary to what one might think, that the concept is absent from world religions - it is defined here as a concern for the welfare of others as an end in itself. When altruism is defined in terms of action and relative fitness within and between groups, it is found in all group level functional organisations. In humans, this manifests as teamwork, which the author regards as the signature adaptation of our species.

The later chapters of the book are devoted to a consideration of altruism in the context of religion, economics and everyday life. Religions promote altruistic action within the members of the community, but not always outside, although this is precisely what Jesus encourages in the Sermon on the Mount. The invisible hand and the work of Ayn Rand on the virtue of selfishness provide the context for a discussion of altruism in economics. The author takes the view that

it is a monumental mistake to think that a large society can self-organise on the basis of individual greed - some structure to coordinate action and prevent exploitation from within is required (one notes widening inequalities). The next chapter considers important factors in pro-social behaviour drawing data from a study where it is apparent that the pro-sociality of the individual is highly correlated with their social environment. However, there is a pathological side to altruism, for instance in terms of co-dependency that can lead to a mutually destructive relationship. This book also ends on a positive note calling for planetary altruism expressed in choosing policies with the welfare of the whole world in mind. The group analysis in this book complements the more individual emphasis of the previous one.

The Myth of Race

Robert Wald Sussman

Harvard University Press 2014, 374 pp., £25.95, h/b.

This comprehensive book begins with an anecdote from Guy Harrison, who studied anthropology at university in the 1980s and learned for the first time that biological races do not exist. He wondered why most educated people had not heard that most anthropologists reject the notion of biological races while upholding a cultural theory. I too was in the position of Guy Harrison before reading this book, as I suspect are many of you who read these words. (I asked a biology graduate if she knew this – she did not). The author traces the origins of modern racist ideology to the Spanish Inquisition and 16th century theories of racial degeneration, which became a central justification for Western imperialism and slavery. Since that time, these have been used to argue for inherent defects in particular races, when they are in fact universally distributed. In the 19th century, these ideas fuelled eugenics and fed directly into Nazi propaganda. Sussman explains the important work of Franz Boas in developing what is now the mainstream anthropological view. However, he shows that so-called scientific racism continues to be supported by certain foundations wedded to a conservative ideology. By the end of the book, the reader is entirely clear that 'race is not a biological reality among humans; there are no human biological races' even if this belief forms part of our cultural reality. This is an important corrective to many widespread misconceptions in this field.

Stargazers Almanac 2015

Richard Knox and David Harper

Floris Books 2015, £14.99, p/b.

I meant to mention this Almanac in December as we are now already in April. Each month has a north and south aspect illustrated as of 2200 on the 15th of the month. There are notes on the planets and other objects of interest for each month and also on spacecraft missions coming to fruition. This year the New Horizons craft launched in 2006 will reach Pluto. An ideal guide for those with a general interest.

MEDICINE-HEALTH

Genomics and the Reimagining of Personalised Medicine

Richard Tutton

Ashgate 2014, 203 pp., £60, h/b.

Sir William Osler, the Canadian-born Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford a hundred years ago famously said that it was more important to know what kind of patient had the disease than what kind of disease the patient had. This remark highlights one of the main themes of this highly informative book, that between specificity and universality in the relationship between patients and disease. It places the debate within the historical development of medicine and the tension between the art and the science. There is an interesting discussion of holism in the 1930s (although no mention of the Peckham experiment) and subsequent claims that health and illness include psychosocial factors as well as biological ones. Overall, diagnosis has shifted towards risk biomarkers and away from clinical observation. The new narrative of personalisation in genomics includes customisation based on genetic risk factors as well as the potential empowerment of people to make better decisions about their health. This is all treated in terms of medical interventions with no mention of lifestyle, which is surely the ultimate empowering decision that an individual can make. In addition, only around 5% of diseases are strictly genetic, and many genes are activated epigenetically by lifestyle and environmental factors.

After an initial historical chapter, the author moves on to the way that pharmacological individuality has evolved into personalised medicine, which has then been marketed by the industry with considerable promissory hype. One example might be vaccination against cervical cancer, which has now become a highly profitable treatment, a case of what the author calls mass customisation – marketed at least in part by the generation of fear. The model put forward by Francis Collins is the empowerment one I referred to above, which is meant to lead to improved health and lowering of health costs. Again, there is only an implicit reference to lifestyle by way of prevention. This approach also encourages a multiplicity of expensive tests. Overall, this new personalised medicine is still informed by a mechanistic approach focusing primarily on molecular biology, which provides its research base. The author himself advocates a wider view including the social and economic dimensions.

Spitting Blood

Helen Bynum

Oxford University Press 2015, £10.99, p/b.

This thorough and highly readable study of the history of tuberculosis makes grim reading at times. The prologue tells the story of the struggles of George Orwell, who was only 46 when he died of TB at the height of his fame in 1950. The main narrative is a history of Western medicine with special reference to the growing understanding of TB and sheds light on the evolution of medical thinking. Galen was one of the first people to systematise medical diagnosis. The 'tubercle' hypothesis covers the 18th century and includes the work of Giovanni Morgagni from Padua and Matthew Baillie, then Rene Laennec in the early 19th century. There is an extensive description of John Keats' case and his treatment by James Clark (Keats' house in Rome is well worth a visit). Changing fashions and sedentary lifestyles had an effect on the 'fashionable' disease in the 19th century and it was not until the pioneering work of Robert Koch in the 1880s that the disease was properly understood at a bacterial level. The contagion implied transformed the disease into a public health issue and coincided with the rise of the sanatorium. Then we come to the successful antibiotic era of streptomycin. At the end, however, as in other fields, we are seeing the rise of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis as the bacteria evolve through natural selection to challenge our therapeutic interventions. This is an ideal overview for the general reader that will also be of interest to historians.

PHILOSOPHY-RELIGION

A History of Pythagoreanism

Carl A Huffman (editor)

Cambridge University Press 2014, 521 pp., £70, h/b.

In his *History of Western Philosophy*, Bertrand Russell famously described Pythagoras as a cross between Einstein and Mary Baker Eddy. He has had an immense influence on Western thought, but there are no contemporary sources about him and the best-known biographies were written several hundred years after his death. This volume is quite simply the most impressive resource available to Pythagorean scholars and brings the scholarship of the last 50 years right up to date. Much of this has derived from the work of two

scholars who took a different view – Walter Burkert and W.C.K Guthrie. It is apparent that the rigorous and systematic nature of modern scholarship does not correspond to the way the ancient mind operated, and it is interesting that one contributor observes that, while modern scholarly consciousness is largely instrumental, the approach of Pythagoras was more receptive, in other words open to insights from the right hemisphere.

The introduction gives an overview of the volume as well as a critical summary of the contributions. It is clear that scholars take very different views depending on how they read the evidence. One area of controversy, for example, is the relationship between Orphism and Pythagoreanism and whether the followers of these traditions all believed in metempsychosis and vegetarianism. A number of myths are discarded, for instance that Pythagoras was the originator of the ratios and concords in music. The scope of the work is immense, treating Pythagoras and his influence up to the early Renaissance with the work of Ficino. I learned about the importance of his successors Philolaus and Archytas, with whom I was not previously acquainted. Other chapters cover politics and society, the Pythagorean way of life and Pythagorean ethics, religion, harmonics, his influence on Plato and Aristotle and then in the Roman culture. The three lives of Pythagoras by Diogenes Laertius, Porphyry and Iamblichus each have a separate chapter. While the volume as a whole is aimed at scholars, general readers can benefit from the extraordinary scholarship displayed in their particular areas of interest.

The Stoic Sage

Rene Brouwer

Cambridge University Press 2014, 230 pp., £60, h/b.

Subtitled 'the early Stoics on wisdom, sagehood and Socrates', this is a scholarly investigation of these themes starting from the two extant definitions that wisdom is knowledge of human and divine matters and fitting expertise (*techne*) within a framework of excellence or *arete* and applied to the three areas of nature, behaviour and reasoning - thus physical, ethical and logical. These definitions are examined in detail before moving on to consider the moment of becoming wise or what it means in terms of a radical change of state. The sage was thought to be a person with a stable knowledge of the true, but few Stoics claimed that status, which was thought to be rarer than the Phoenix. Another reason was the fact that they modelled themselves on Socrates, who strove for wisdom but never thought he had attained it - in this case how could anyone lay claim to the status? The author considers the characterisation of Socrates in some detail and also the fact that Epicurus did declare himself a sage (and anti-Socratic). Wisdom did not mean omniscience but rather a perfectly rational stable disposition. Eventually, this tradition gave way to Christianity with its very different conceptions. This book clarifies an important notion of the ancient world.

Narrating Karma and Rebirth

Naomi Appleton

Cambridge University Press 2014, 229 pp., £60, h/b.

Subtitled 'Buddhist and Jain multi-life stories', this interesting book explores how such stories of karma and rebirth are used to illustrate these foundational doctrines and their moral implications. Both these traditions share a common understanding of how the universe operates in terms of rebirth and ultimate liberation. The author sets the scene with a story about Princess Ruca trying to persuade her father the King that his current sexual conduct will have serious implications for the conditions of his future rebirths, which she illustrates ostensibly from her own experience; sociologically, it is interesting to observe that being born as a woman is considered less desirable than a male incarnation. However, this is a great deal better than being reborn as an animal or in one of the hellish realms. These revelations are an allegorical form of moral and religious instruction rather than a literal description of truth. They are designed to frighten, inspire, provoke and shock.

The underlying theme is human actions and their results - various implications are explored, including the consequences of taking life and of sexual impropriety. On the positive side, there are implications for giving and renunciation and progress can be made towards a life of a *jina* or *buddha* as a staging post towards liberation. These lives, and those of the Buddha and Mahavira, are moral exemplars and also illustrate the different emphases of generosity on the one hand and preservation and pursuit of ascetic values on the other. The next chapter considers karma and community while the last discusses memory and omniscience. This is where it would have been useful to bring in as a point of comparison the work of Ian Stevenson on children who remember previous lives as empirical evidence for the kind of patterns analysed by the author. These other forms of recall suggest elements of continuity, but without the moral and religious context explored in this book.

Teilhard's Mysticism

Kathleen Duffy SSJ

Orbis Books 2014, 140 pp., £11.99, p/b.

This book by physicist Kathleen Duffy is a real gem – subtitled 'seeing the inner face of evolution.' Seeing is the operative word, but covers other forms of sensing including listening and the sense of smell, all portals for Teilhard into the light and beauty of the world held within the Divine Presence. The book begins with an outline biography, reminding readers of his trajectory in palaeontology and highlighting the suffering of not being able to share his most profound reflections on the inner face of evolution. The structure of the book uses his scheme of five circles: presence, consistence, energy, spirit and person – each entering a more profound level. Duffy updates the reader on modern developments in the sciences, which she is sure Teilhard would have welcomed. He already understood the importance of self-organisation embodied in his understanding of tangential energy. His other form was radial energy involving novelty and emergence. In the process of complexification, more sophisticated forms of consciousness become possible. We become capable of expressing greater freedom and truth, now in the noosphere of the Internet.

This is critical for our human future and that of the planet. For Teilhard, faith in the future is a moral imperative, however dark the present. He foresaw globalisation, technological advance and the power of reflection as factors that could bring us together. He also specified three conditions for a dynamic human future: sustainable structures, education for the future and love. This entails individuals embodying a zest for living and the 'widest form of the love of God,' a task of universalisation and superpersonalisation in which we can all take part at this time of transition and transformation. For Teilhard this means working with the Cosmic Christ as an energy and force of convergence, overcoming resistance to the 'other' and helping raise the world to a new level of consciousness and love. Readers can get a real glimpse of this powerful vision in this richly informed book.

Philosophers of our Times

Ted Honderich (editor)

Oxford University Press 2015, 373 pp., £19.99, h/b.

This collection of 18 lectures is drawn from the Annual Lecture series of the Royal Institute of Philosophy and features many famous names in the field. They address five groups of questions concerned with philosophy of mind, moral philosophy, questions of freedom and determinism in relation to identity and religion, political and social philosophy, and philosophy in a more general sense. Each is preceded by a helpful introduction by the editor, highlighting the context and main points. Topics include perception, mental representation, attention, intention, the good, reason, knowledge, belief and face, religious tolerance and moral agency. The content is somewhat technical, but pitched at a general level and therefore accessible to readers with less background.

Among the most interesting lectures for me were Mary Warnock on what is natural - asking if describing something as unnatural is an argument against it, in the context of genetic modification and cloning. She shows how people use different kinds of argument, some scientific, some religious and some political - or even a mixture of all three. There is an excellent exposition of free will as a problem in neurobiology by John Searle, and the final lecture by David Chalmers asks why there isn't more progress in philosophy. Since it is largely a matter of argument as distinct from proof or scientific method, philosophy tends to deal in sophisticated disagreements, depending on your viewpoint. He illustrates this with May 2009 survey calibrating answers to 30 important questions in philosophy asking why there is less convergence than in the hard sciences. Premises can be denied and inferences rejected, and there are many different kinds of explanation. Reader will find much to grapple with in this fine collection.

Tetralogue

Timothy Williamson

Oxford University Press 2015, 151 pp., £10.99, h/b.

The author of this four-way dialogue on truth and falsity, knowledge and belief, relativism and dogmatism is Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford. The dialogue takes place on a train and begins with Bob claiming that his garden wall falling on his leg was due to a spell cast by his neighbour, a claim that scientist Sarah can't take seriously but which relativist Zac is able to accommodate in his balancing view. It's a pity that the author chose witchcraft rather than telepathy as his example as the debate could have been informed by a disagreement on evidence bases. Logician Roxana (aka the author?) makes her incisive appearance in Part 2 and helpfully distinguishes, for instance, between questions of truth and falsehood and certainty and uncertainty. Sarah comes across as a fallibilist who is also a moral or cultural relativist in the last discussion on slapping. The reader can certainly appreciate the value of trained minds and clear thinking as the dialogue proceeds – this is an offbeat and engaging introduction to logic using generic examples to which many readers will relate.

The Reason for All Existence

David McLeod

O Books (John Hunt) 2014, 86 pp., £7.99, p/b.

This is very much a book for the metaphysically inclined, dealing as it does with fundamental philosophical propositions and involving basic intuitive thinking to perceive whether a concept is true or not. Evolution is seen as creation, and growth as evolution. The two fundamental categories are those of pure nothingness and what the author calls Infinitum Perfectus representing the idea that every individual entity has reached its ultimate potential and has transcended its individuality. This is an eternal journey. The next two chapters deal with flow and the nature of good and evil in relation to right and wrong in terms of best and worst outcomes. Free will is discussed in relation to a continual and infinite series of reactions, which puts it in a different framework but neglects the openness of the life process going forward. The last chapter provides a diagrammatic representation of the thesis, which is in some ways similar to Whitehead's idea of the prior and consequent natures of God, although this book stands on its own ground without any reference to any other thinkers.

Dreams and Recollections

Jack Call

Christian Alternative (John Hunt) 2014, 123 pp., £9.99, p/b.

The subtitle indicates that the book is concerned with our immortal selves, but the argument is purely inductive and philosophical rather than relating to any evidence for or against the proposition. It is based on the Freudian idea that we cannot imagine ourselves dead and also on analogies between life and dream, death and sleep. He suggests that dying may be like waking up from a dream but also life is falling asleep into a dream - there is in fact some evidence that this may be true. On the basis of his inductive argument, the author considers it probable that we have existed before the present life and will continue to exist afterwards. The book is certainly intellectually engaging, ranging over a wide area but its interest will be primarily for those looking to consider the philosophy and logic of immortality.

The Original Gita Aphorisms

Gerard D.C. Kuiken

OTAM Books 2014, 133 pp., no price given.

The Original Gita predates the Bhagavad-Gita and can be considered its core. This short book by the author of *Eastern Thought and the Gita: The Original Gita* and *The Bhagavad-Gita Compared* consists simply of these verses embodying the striving for oneness its various forms presented in Sanskrit, English and Dutch with some textual and linguistic notes. This makes it suitable for reflective reading and for those who read more than one language and insight into the different ways in which subtleties can be expressed. This is interesting for me as I am grappling with Dutch at the moment, although the text is more suitable for specialist scholars.

Reading Philo

Torrey Seland (editor)

Wm B. Eerdmans 2014, 345 pp., £29.99, p/b.

Philo of Alexandria was one of the foremost thinkers of his time and renowned as a theologian, philosopher and politician. He was a contemporary of both Jesus and the apostle Paul, so his writings are important sources for understanding ancient Judaism, early Christianity and the general intellectual climate of that era. The introduction characterises him as a Jew whose theological reflections are embedded in Greek, Hellenistic and Roman patterns of thought, basing his principles on Moses (Sophia) and Plato (Logos). The book is one for scholars and consists of an explanation of his context and reasons why and how to study his work, for instance in relation to the New Testament and the patristic tradition. His understanding of the soul owes a great deal to Plato (p. 123), but he also drew ideas from Aristotle. So far as the development of early Christianity is concerned, some scholars regard his work as the single most important body of material for understanding first and second century Christianity. Indeed, another scholar remarks that if the works of Philo had just been discovered, they would be considered of comparable importance to the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Rose Chamber

Caroline Brown

Inhams Publishing 2015, 325 pp., no price given, p/b – see www.inhams.org

This is a remarkable chronicle of a profound spiritual journey leading the author into a deep understanding of the hidden patterns of transformation operating at many levels in our lives. In the midst of the challenges of everyday life over a period of years, the author is guided by a wise teacher to enter into the spiritual worlds through meditation. The path is hard and involves much letting go and integrating of the past, both in terms of experiences and the qualities these have developed. At a certain point she enters into a place she calls the Rose Chamber, from where she engages in work helping those who have just arrived in the halls of the dead and are struggling to orient themselves. Throughout the book, colours play an important healing role as well as representing the qualities of certain beings - blue gold for example. She is initiated into a special healing group bound by threads of love and is given a new spiritual name, Miriam. Together with the others, she takes a solemn oath pledging herself to the service of the All-Being of love. All the time, she is struggling with negativity and self-doubt, as also reflected in the life experiences she describes. However, she understands directly that we are all protected by an angelic being.

She discovers that she was a Cathar in a previous incarnation (I now live in this region) and that she now needs to learn to love the Earth and the physical body. Psychospiritually, she has to be released from hatred for her oppressors and arrive at a place of forgiveness and trust. Two significant people from that time reappear in the present life where further opportunities for love and forgiveness are presented. More profoundly, a group calling themselves the Manichaeans is training to transform evil into love and have had to experience perpetrating evil themselves and subsequently transforming their own negativity. Caroline belongs to this group and has had an opportunity in this life to transcend the feeling of hatred that she had at the Cathar time. She revisits the scene when she was burned at the stake and was so consumed by hatred for her oppressors that she was unable to rise out of the body.

Working with the shadow is a critical part of this transformative process; we must learn to love and accept those parts of ourselves. She also manages to work through hostile feelings for her mother and they both reach a space of mutual recognition and love. Her sister, Sarah, dies when she is very young but reappears in the spiritual realm as part of the unfolding narrative, and is also there to welcome her mother when she makes her transition. Given the widespread ignorance of subtle spiritual realities, it takes a great deal of courage to publish such a book so full of important insights. I myself take it absolutely seriously, perhaps partly because of my reading of Swedenborg. As I wrote in another review about Rudolf Steiner and Peter Deunov, the overcoming of evil with love is one of the ultimate human tests and will continue to present itself as a challenge well into the future. Anyone treading a similar path will find invaluable guidance and inspiration as well as deep insight in this book.

Edge of Grace

Prajna Ginty

Prajna Press 2014, 247 pp., $14.95, p/b.

This is the story of a spiritual quest with peaceful periods in an ashram and then transformational episodes arising directly from family life and the health challenges of the author's children. It shows up the tensions inherent in balancing separation with union and dealing with all one's personality issues at the same time as intensely pursuing a spiritual path. She leaves the ashram in 1988 at the behest of her spiritual teacher, who then suddenly dies. Her twins are born with severe brain injuries and domestic life is hugely challenging, in the midst of which she tries to 'live awake.' When it looks like we are cracking up, we can in fact crack open. It is at this point that she meets her new Zen teacher Adyashanti and begins to reach a new level, assuming her new name, which means insightful knowing. There is a fascinating conversation with her other daughter Bodhi, who suddenly remarks that she does not think there is a me. The last few pages are worth the price of the book: "awakening to yourself as Spirit is to look to the depths of your being to see that what you are is Light… We are Light, everything is Light, there is no other. Everything is you. Everyone is you. One Light living you, living me, and living everyone. Light is always moving in the direction of that which does not yet know it is Light. Light that knows it is Light has no fear of that which does not realise it is Light…. Light sees everything as an expression of Light – equal to itself, undivided and whole."

A Little Book of Unknowing

Jennifer Kavanagh (SMN)

Christian Alternative (John Hunt) 2014, 62 pp., £4.99, p/b.

Many readers will be familiar with The Cloud of Unknowing as a well-known 14th century spiritual text. Unknowing involves letting go of control and being open to inner guidance - it is the opposite of a decisive, outwardly driven life, reminding us of its inherent uncertainty that invites and attitude of trust. In this small book, Jennifer explores 'what we think we know, what we don't know, what we can and can't know' with a special emphasis on letting go of a limited kind of knowing. She sees spirituality as our capacity to be open enough to realise that there are things that we cannot know and fully comprehend and which form part of an unseen order with which we can become aligned. The chapters are short with a couple of pertinent questions at the end. They concern expectation, different ways of knowing and living, creativity, reclaiming the dark and acceptance. This helps to create an inner stillness and receptivity where we can hear the inner voice of God. We also find ourselves arriving at a place of love and appreciating the close link between love and knowledge. I recommend this book for contemplative reading and reflection that can lead to a new opening of inner space.

Cathars, White Eagle and St John

Colum Hayward

Polair Books 2015, 113 pp., limited edition, p/b.

Colum's grandmother, Grace Cooke, was an early visitor to the Cathar region in 1931, where she had a visionary experience at the castle of Lordat five years before she founded the White Eagle Lodge. This book consists of a number of articles and talks connected with the Lodge and the publication of the book *The Cathar View* previously reviewed in these pages. It is well-known that Cathar initiates (parfaits and parfaites) carried the Gospel of John on them at all times, so it is fitting that the first article is entitled St John - the First Cathar? Much of his imagery refers to light and darkness, and Colum is convinced that one of the essential characteristics of the Cathars is an inner awareness of the light and living from it. He also discusses other non-canonical sources connected with John and the Gnostic element in Catharism.

There is good evidence, explained in the excellent book *The Treasure of Montsegur* by Walter Birks and R.A. Gilbert that Cathar Christianity was a separate transmission going back to the early Church, as particularly evidenced by of their central sacrament, the *consolamentum*, which served as an initiation to become a parfait or extreme unction for the dying. Colum focuses on the evidence of the living power of 13th century Cathars as much as on their beliefs. He writes about the transfiguration as a parallel to the shining light seen by his grandmother. He also mentions the connection between the Bulgarian Bogomils and their contemporary manifestation in the work of Peter Deunov - we were together in the camp in the Rila mountains in the summer. This short book brings the spirit of Catharism to life and shows how it can still be applied today.

PSYCHOLOGY-CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

Extreme

Emma Barrett and Paul Martin

Oxford University Press 2014, 278 pp., £16.99, h/b.

Subtitled 'why some people thrive at the limits', this engrossing study investigates the psychological and emotional qualities of people who willingly expose themselves to extreme hardship and harsh conditions, sometimes losing their lives in the process. The first few chapters recount experiences of life at the edge in terms of bravery, hardship, sleep deprivation, monotony and boredom, loneliness and the difficulty of relating to other people in extreme conditions. Then there are chapters on some of the qualities required: teamwork, expertise, resilience and focus, all with vivid and sometimes spine-chilling examples. One person who appears early in the book is Apsley Cherry-Garrard, who was a member of the 1910 to 1913 Antarctic expedition, for which 8,000 men applied. He remarked that it was the cleanest and most isolated way of having a bad time that has been devised. He and another two men embarked on a horrendous journey of five weeks during the Antarctic winter hauling to sledges weighing a third of the ton in complete darkness at temperatures of -60°C. The cold was so intense that that their teeth split and they

experienced frostbite inside their sleeping bags. We should also remember that they had no way of communicating with anyone. This shows almost unimaginable endurance, and, interestingly, Cherry-Garrard kept himself going with an apt mantra 'you've got it in the neck - stick it, stick it!' You can say that again.

In the light of this, one can understand the remark that the motivation for people climbing Everest is about enduring pain and seeking, perhaps, something like a state of grace. One form of hardship is squalor, and there is a graphic description of the NASA 'urine management system' inside the capsules where there were sometimes free-floating faeces due to the lack of gravity. Then there is hunger and thirst as well as sheer pain. Chronic shortage of sleep can have drastic effects - and you can imagine the extreme exhaustion of Cherry-Garrard and his colleagues. Then what about Ellen MacArthur spending three months at sea while circumnavigating the globe? She documented taking 891 naps lasting an average of 36 minutes. The explorer Wilfred Thesiger makes a number of appearances, including in the chapter on the monotony as he trudged across the desert day after day. At the end of each chapter there are some general observations about the conditions and how to cope with them – sometimes, like resilience, scaled-down to more everyday life situations. These are on the whole brief, and could well have been elaborated, but one can appreciate the sense of having lived life to the full and the benefits of developing focus, endurance and resilience. Read from the comfort of an armchair, this book can provide a vicarious experience of precarious situations most of us would rather not be in.

Consciousness

Josh Weisberg

Polity Press 2014, 174 pp., £15.99, p/b.

This is a very good book on orthodox approaches to consciousness. It discusses the strengths and weaknesses of all the major schools of thought including mysterianism, dualism, non-reductive views, identity theory, functionalism, first-order and higher-order representationalism. The author frames the question using David Chalmers' hard problem, which is itself an implicit theory, asking as it does why certain physical brain processes result in subjective experience. The sense here is that the brain causes rather than is correlated with consciousness. The author himself has a strong philosophical predilection to pursue the physicalist agenda, using the commonly held argument that it has been so successful in other areas. A key issue is whether the epistemic mystery of consciousness can only be resolved by adding another category to our metaphysical and ontological understanding, as dualism does. The author prefers what Karl Popper calls promissory materialism, assuming that consciousness will one day prove amenable to a physical approach, whether non-reductive or not.

The main limitation of the book is what it leaves out: there is no mention of the work of Sir Karl Popper and the detailed neurological dualist theories of Sir John Eccles in *The Self and its Brain*; nor is the work of Max Velmans on self-reflexive consciousness mentioned. Needless to say, there is no reference to the important work of Ken Wilber or even Alan Wallace and Iain McGilchrist. And, along with all other orthodox books on consciousness, nothing is said about anomalies that challenge the orthodox view, as magisterially set out in *Irreducible Mind* and more recently in *Beyond Physicalism*. It is a great pity that most undergraduates are exposed only to these orthodox approaches and lines of evidence, which serve only to perpetuate the intellectual blinkers of university departments, however clever and articulate the proponents, as in this otherwise sophisticated and lucid book.

Heart of Miracles

Karen Henson Jones

Hay House 2015, 225 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Many people pursuing conventional careers they asked themselves at some point if there is more to life than material success. Karen Jones's journey is both agonising and ecstatic, since she suffered from a rare heart condition exposing her to the possibility of sudden cardiac arrest and death. This turns out to be ongoing saga even when she is firmly engaged on the spiritual path. A critical experience is a dream encounter with Jesus, who tells her that he is sending help. This eventually enables her to take a spiritual perspective on her life and resist the pressure imposed by the traditional expectations of her father. She recounts her adventures in India and her gradual awakening leading to the establishment of her own yoga centre with other members of her family. In the course of her journey, she also explores reincarnation and Gnosticism, arriving at a more profound understanding of life. It is a tale of immense courage and resilience.

Awareness is Freedom

Itai Ivtzan

Changemaker Books (John Hunt) 2015, 171 pp., £11.99, p/b.

The author of this instructive and informative book is the leader of the Masters in applied positive psychology at the University of East London. As such, he sits at the interface between psychology and spirituality, which is not always a comfortable place to be, given that the interest of psychology is mainly in the mind as such, while spirituality implies growth and transformation. The book is effectively his own bridge between these two fields. It consists of eight lessons, beginning with the interface between psychology and spirituality itself and dealing with the concepts of personality and ego, which form our interpretation of life. Each chapter contains a validated psychological measurement tool that readers can fill in, as well as weekly exercises. He introduces meditative techniques for the wandering attention, aware and unaware thinking leading to the development of non-reactive awareness; then a discussion of the self and its patterns and the fact that everything in life is in fact neutral - it is our interpretation that gives it colour. We can move beyond ego formed patterns and uncover a more authentic self. He discusses the art of presence and mindfulness techniques, introducing the lovingkindness meditation. He reflects on impermanence and meaning and on how we engage with change before finishing with a chapter on body awareness bringing thoughts and emotions together. Of course, the value of this book lies as much in putting it into practice as in reading the information. Its strength lies in bringing psychology and spirituality together in a readable and practical format. See www.awarenessasfreedom.com

Mindfulness

Ed Halliwell

Hay House Basics 2015, 224 pp., £8.99, p/b.

Having just returned from the mindfulness retreat at Frenchman's Cove in Jamaica, the contents of this excellent guide were more familiar. Not surprisingly, the book has been endorsed by many leading practitioners in the field, and is a thorough practical introduction. Ed is also the co-author of *The Mindfulness Manifesto*, previously reviewed in these pages. The four parts introduce the foundations of mindfulness and the way that it has developed into a therapy in the last 30 years; the nature of awareness in terms of looking and opening; embodying and letting go, and the nature of mindful action and wholeness. There are also a dozen mindfulness practices including body scanning, mountain meditation and mindful walking. Like the book above, this one is arranged in nine chapters - one a week, with corresponding practices that are also summarised at the end of each chapter. The experiences of four people are also woven into the chapters as they proceed, so that the reader gains a real understanding all the difference that mindfulness can make. As Alison Armstrong pointed out in Jamaica, we can simply

bring mindfulness to our everyday activities and change the quality of our experience as a result. For anyone looking for a practical introduction to the field, there can be no better place to start. See also www.edhalliwell.com

Stillness in Mind

Simon Cole

Changemaker Books (John Hunt) 2015, 118 pp., £9.99, p/b.

This is a practical book on mindfulness and meditation with a difference. It is grounded within the Western therapeutic tradition, and especially influenced by the approaches of Martin Buber, Carl Rogers and Eugene Gendlin. It sets out what he calls a Clear Space Meditation Path in two parts, as well as the applications of mindfulness to everyday life such as eating and breathing. Readers are encouraged to cultivate empathy and the process of being with whatever is happening in the body, thoughts or emotions. There are many individual meditations threaded into the narrative. Towards the end, there is an interesting account of three consecutive meditation sittings, the contents of which would-be meditators will certainly recognise. It is nice to think, as the author does, of meditation as company along the way and an aid to harmonising our inner and outer worlds. Ultimately, however, this practice should benefit others as well as oneself, which is why kindness and benevolence are central. Meditators of all levels of experience will benefit from engaging with this book. See www.life-counselling.co.uk

A Simple Guide to Voyaging the Energetic Universe

Michael Webster

Lulu 2014, 64 pp., no price given – see www.waveformenergetics.com

The author and founder of what he calls Waveform Energetics based on his experience of the 'Energetic Matrix', which we can all access beyond our immediate sensory experience. It gives guidelines to the reader that I think can only be fully understood by experiencing the training for oneself. We are all limited by programming and preconceptions that constitute our existing frame of reference and field of awareness. However, we can equally become conscious receivers of the information that is all around us by tuning in various levels of energy fields and emotional resonances. We can become more aware of this Matrix and our place in it, using both conscious and unconscious faculties - head and heart. There are detailed instructions for doing this and illustrations of corresponding unusual experiences mediated by these techniques. It is important to align and integrate all our faculties.

Past Lives

Atasha Fyfe

Hay House 2014, 213 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This is not a book discussing the arguments for and against reincarnation, but rather a guide for those who have already arrived at this conclusion, for whatever reason. It does, however, give some historical background before embarking on a series of chapters about how to discover past life and the benefits of past life awareness, which includes a broader and deeper sense of identity. The quest can be either through inner or outer clues, with sections on children's memories, places, talents, triggers and the ways in which the body may hold past life memories. The second part addresses health, abundance and relationships. There are many fascinating case histories including a person who recognised himself as the subject in Gainsborough's Blue Boy. Another interesting observation connected with Arthur Guirdham and the Cathars is that their nightmares were worse around the anniversary of the massacre at Montsegur on March 16 1244. Some stories also contain interesting synchronicities and bodily connections to memories of previous lives similar to some cases from Ian Stevenson. The book is accessible and practical for the general reader.

Lucid Dreaming

Charlie Morley

Hay House 2014, 198 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This is an excellent introductory book on lucid dreaming by a young author who also trained with Akong Rinpoche and is a practising Buudhist. He first experimented with lucid dreaming as a teenager and has been able to integrate it with Buddhist teachings in his Mindfulness of Dream and Sleep programmes (see www.charliemorley.com). The book sets out the basics of lucid dreaming and outlines scientific studies while making it clear that the intention to remember your dreams and keeping a dream journal are essential first steps. The book also examines the role of archetypes and nightmares in integrating the shadow and relates the phenomenon cross-culturally to shamanism and dream yoga. For me some of the most interesting content was in the case histories. One man cured himself of nicotine addiction after a lucid conversation with a woman who said she was his brain. Another woman met her deceased father in a lucid dream and found total acceptance of her unconventional lifestyle. Yet another dreams of her death and becomes the light. Ultimately lucid dreaming can be understood as a form of spiritual training leading to the expanded awareness of lucid living. Those looking for a more extensive treatment can read his *Dreams of Awakening.*

Co-Creating at its Best

Wayne Dyer and Esther Hicks

Hay House 2014, 157 pp., £8.99, p/b.

The idea behind this dialogue is to open up a conversation between Wayne Dyer and Esther Hicks, who channels a wise intelligence called Abraham and whose books have also sold millions. The dialogue covers many issues of central concern, especially the relationship between inner and outer lives in terms of our vibration and the corresponding operation of the law of attraction. In this sense, alignment with the Source is key and this is about how we feel rather than what we think. When we are aligned, we are inspired. When we think a thought consistently, we give it energetic momentum, contributing to the process of co-creation and subsequent manifestation. And sometimes we really need to push the reset button. One issue that comes up is the transition of Esther's husband Jerry and how she is handling this. It seems that he has now become more than he was, so that her familiar understanding of him needs to be expanded and he can contribute to her work in any way. On a planet where media is so dominated by violence and bad news, we need to shift our perspective in order not to contribute to this pattern ourselves. These dialogues give a wider view of reality and life.

Contacting your Spirit Guide

Sylvia Browne

Hay House 2015, 175 pp., £9.99, p/b.

This might seems a strange book to review on these pages, but many readers are aware of an invisible spiritual dimension that influences our own. Moreover, the notion of guardian angels belongs to mainstream Christianity even if it is seldom discussed. In this book, Sylvia draws on her own experience of guides within her overall understanding of life. She sees each of us creating a life chart with the help of more advanced beings and then trying to remember and fulfil this in physical life. In neo-Platonic terms the fall is a fall into forgetfulness of our divine nature and origin. In her experience, guides transmit 20 to 30 messages a day, which most of us probably miss. The first part of the book makes suggestions on how to contact your spirit guide, while the second gives an impression of life in dimensions of the spiritual world. It seems that our immersion in time is responsible for a great deal of stress - some of the most interesting pages in the book are reflections on the nature of time. There is an intriguing analogy that the Now is like a needle on a gramophone record that keeps moving from groove to groove. In addition, we are in a sense living all our lives at once, which of course is a very hard concept to grasp from our perspective, but perhaps there is

a hint in the sentence that 'everything is rotating in a circle'. So far as the Akashic record is concerned, it seems that events can either be fully experienced or viewed on the kind of scanner. This is certainly a mind-stretching read.

The Caveman Rules for Survival

Dawn C. Walton

Changemakers Books (John Hunt), 143 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Most readers will be familiar with the triune brain and its implications for human behaviour. It is unfortunate that this basic information about our operating system is not part of the education system, so we can go through life without any understanding of the impulses that move us. In this informative and entertaining book, the author explains how the subconscious runs 90% of our lives and tries in its own way to protect us. It has three fundamental rules, which form the kernel the book: react first or you will die, if your parents don't love you, you will die, and if you are not part of the pack, you will die. Our childhood experience gives the subconscious certain rules to apply in dangerous situations and the author explains how a presenting problem like shying away from confrontation is interpreted by the subconscious. Sometimes parents can unwittingly trigger the formulation of a rule by snapping at children because they themselves are tired. Therapeutically, the author helps clients remove the triggers of these patterns. Trauma, however, is an exception to the rule and must be taken very seriously. At the end of the book, there are practical suggestions about how we can increase our willpower and self-control so as to move beyond survival techniques. It is clear that self-awareness is essential if we are really going to change and have more freedom to make real choices.

ECOLOGY-FUTURES STUDIES

The Anthropocene

Christian Schwägerl

Synergetic Press 2014, 235 pp., $19.95, p/b.

In 2000, Nobel prize-winning chemist Paul Crutzen coined the geological term Anthropocene to describe our current era, succeeding the Holocene, as a period in which humans dominate the Earth's biological, chemical and geological processes and become responsible as stewards of the planet. In his foreword, Crutzen remarks that our 200 years of industrialisation are testimony to our power of innovation and creativity, while at the same time demonstrating more perilous powers of degradation and destruction. He calls for us to recognise our opportunity to build a long lasting, viable, creative and freedom-loving human civilisation. In this sense, to become aware also to become responsible and ultimately an active participant in creating a new form of sustainable civilisation. With his journalistic eye, the author takes the reader on a tour of planetary processes and trends including agriculture, forests, the seas and coral reefs, all the time suggesting a middle way between current policies and visionary environmentalism while at the same time avoiding doomsday scenarios as ultimately self-defeating. Having added the techno-sphere to the geosphere and the biosphere, we are now in a position to implement what he calls bioadaptation rather than exploitative biotechnology; this also calls for a new eco-economy of symbiosis rather than exploitation and an exclusive focus on economic growth. He rightly maintains that this will involve a new form of education, especially at the MBA level. The future depends on the action potentials of all kinds of groups, not just governments. The author proposes his own scenario where China plays a critical role and proper monitoring systems, for instance of the oceans, are set up to protect them from overfishing and pollution. At the end of the book, he relates a conversation with Crutzen, part of whose hope for the future results from of our better understanding of our own negative effects on the biosphere. His hope is that self-awareness and empathy will catch up with our technological prowess.

Sustainability – A History

Jeremy L. Caradonna

Oxford University Press 2015, 331 pp., $27.95, h/b.

The word sustainability has only become common currency over the last 25 years, but the idea goes back a lot further, as demonstrated in this wide-ranging study. Fundamentally, it presupposes that our current industrial present cannot endure indefinitely and that radical changes are needed in our relationship to nature. These symptoms are all around us in terms of throwaway consumption, population growth, environmental degradation and pollution, extinction of species, social inequality and unstable economic systems. We need to redefine the relationship between nature, the economy and society. This is not a new message, but it is becoming ever more pressing. One of the main concerns during the 17th and 18th centuries was the management of forests. As far back as 1669, Colbert issued a new decree on forest policy that revised regulations dating back to the 13th century and that lasted until the 19th century. Even in the middle of the 18th century, some people had realised that deforestation led to drier and warmer climates. Rousseau crystallised some changes in attitude in his writings.

The industrial revolution initiated processes that are still going on today, for instance in terms of pollution and greenhouse gases. The author draws on the work of Kirkpatrick Sale to delineate the essential patterns of development. Interestingly, John Stuart Mill was among the first to advocate a steady state economy in which human development would continue. The book moves on to the growth of the environmental movement in the 1960s and 70s and the translation of concepts into action, for instance in the work of EF Schumacher. He includes an interesting chronology from 1969 onwards. Here, the book is primarily US-centric, so there is no mention of Teddy Goldsmith and Satish Kumar. The Gaia Hypothesis is likewise absent, as is the work of David Orr and Fritjof Capra on ecoliteracy. However, as the author observes, we may not live in a sustainable age but we are living in an age of sustainability and we now have the tools and indicators to create a sustainable society, which he spells out in terms of 10 challenges that form our agenda for the future. The historical background makes this an important contribution to the continuing debate.

Sustainable Society

Rudolf Isler

Floris Books 2014, 221 pp., £14.99, p/b.

Towards the end of his life, Rudolf Steiner devoted some serious thought to relationship between politics, economics and culture. His thinking on agriculture has been more influential, but this book redresses the balance by looking at this in a wider context. It covers money, labour and income, land, capital, agriculture and democracy in a series of chapters also containing practical examples of how transformation can happen on the ground. The chapter on money explains the interesting distinction between purchase money, loan money (created by banks) and gift money, each of which has a different function. Although reform of the monetary system is important (the work of Bernard Lietaer is cited) it is not enough to remedy the whole economy. In the section on Labour and income, there are some very interesting models of reciprocity and mutuality that go beyond existing market arrangements and which are organised for the good of all members of the community in accordance with their needs. This is followed up in the chapter on the administration of land by the cultural sphere as in the Buschberghof farm consisting of 92 families. Modern agriculture considers itself as an industry, but Steiner shows how this is not in fact the case as the basic capital of soil can be consistently improved rather than depleted. It is easy to forget that agriculture is in fact our primary form of production and its contrast with industry is illustrated in a neat chart (p. 150). Although it is unlikely that the kind of approach advocated will be adopted on a wide scale, it is already evident that it can work at a local level. The book will be of particular interest to economists rethinking their subject from a new set of basic principles.

Implementing Sustainability in Higher Education

Matthias Barth

Earthscan 2015, 202 pp., $140, h/b.

Subtitled 'learning in an age of transformation', this book brings the challenge of sustainability firmly into the university sector where such ideas should be debated and implemented, especially in terms of education for sustainable development – both teaching and learning. The author continues the work of Sterling and Maxey in their book *The Sustainable University* and takes as his starting point the nine planetary boundaries of Johan Rockstrom and the growing human impact on the Earth's resources as identified by sustainability science. For universities, this means defining intended learning outcomes, learning content and pedagogies as well as developing the necessary competencies and assessment frameworks. Barth considers drivers of and barriers to curriculum change and the evolution of systemic social learning involving not just doing things differently but ultimately doing different things. The book points towards the notion that the sustainable university is an idea whose time has come. As the it shows, this will require a fundamental change in patterns of thinking, so that students begin to learn to understand things systemically rather than only engage in left hemisphere critical analysis. Needless to say, this will have to happen at the staff level first, and books like this can help provide a rationale and guidelines.

Successful Adaptation to Climate Change

Susanne C. Moser and Maxwell T. Boykoff

Routledge 2013, 331 pp., $51.95, p/b.

This major initiative is a collaboration between nearly 40 thinkers on linking science and policy in a rapidly changing world. It provides the necessary background in adaptation science so that policymakers can draw on the best data available. The key factors cited are communication and public engagement, deliberate planning and decision-making, improved fit with other policy goals, justification of adaptation expenditures, accountability and support for learning and adaptive management. The book as a whole takes anthropogenic climate change as a given, based on the IPCC assessments, which may be controversial for some readers. However, some proposed adaptations are clearly better than others and there are discussions of specific maladaptations to such issues as water stress and conservation. Examples are given from around the world. There is a particularly interesting chart about the adaptation action cycle with key points of feedback and decision-making. The very last chapter brings these macro issues onto a personal level by addressing adaptation from the inside out. The previous chapter makes it clear that people are overwhelmed by the potential scale of the challenge but realise that both individual and collective mobilisation and action are required. Readers will be familiar with the call for a new worldview – here the implications are spelt out in more detail as the way we understand the world friends the space in which we operate and structures our responses according to of our assumptions and beliefs. Karen O'Brien is less optimistic about changing others, and therefore calls for working on ourselves both individually and collectively. Ultimately, what Buckminster Fuller called a world that works for everyone would represent successful adaptation, but there are many steps for us to go through.

Global Food Security and Supply

Wayne Martindale

Wiley 2015, 194 pp., £50, p/b.

The author of this book on global food supply chains works at the Sheffield Business School and is editor of an online magazine for food industry innovations, a role that informs his perspective in this book. It covers in considerable detail the basis for food security, food supply chains, the scientific and sociological basis for food security and the challenges we face, especially in relation to developing a sustainable diet. He foresees a second green revolution beyond simple calorific goals to include the nutritional value of foods. Although the food industry is responding to increasing demand for sustainable products, the real money is still made through addictive junk foods containing sugar, salt and fat and which in my view is largely responsible for the so-called obesity epidemic. The author does bring new tools such as life cycle assessment (LCA) into his analysis but is less explicit about the connection between overconsumption and undernutrition so far as the food industry is concerned. He mentions that meals supplied should be 'sustainable, safe and nutritious' without stating that food processing itself is part of the problem and that people should be seeking out unprocessed foods if they want to maintain their health. The interest of the food industry, as in any commercial enterprise, is the maximisation of profit rather than the promotion of health. The industry may have a critical role in 'designing products that are integrated into sustainable diets' but personally I would rather do without such products and eat as naturally as I can. Ultimately, this is a book addressed to the food industry rather than the consumer and in that respect it does make the case for a more sustainable diet.

Depolarising Food and Agriculture

Andrew Barkley and Paul W. Barkley

Earthscan 2015, 196 pp., $49.95, p/b.

Polarisations in agriculture are a reflection of the differences between mechanistic and holistic science: industrial vs. sustainable agriculture, conventional vs. organic production methods and global vs. local food sourcing. As economists, the authors take the view that there are associated costs and benefits to conflicting approaches and that this should set the stage for open debate even if the polarisations persist or new forms arise. They argue that progress means change, change means disruptions (also winners and losers, although this also depends on economic and political power), so progress can be polarising. Their position on GMOs is broadly that of the industry, claiming that they are the single most important advance in the history of agriculture. As one might expect, they are supporters of a market approach but I think they underestimate the persuasive power of advertising and the role of addictive substances in consumer 'choices'. Competition and trade bring about 'creative destruction' and economies of scale leading to industry concentration. Debate around these issues is sure to continue, but it is interesting to speculate about the extent to which competing approaches might come together in the area of sustainable intensification. We know that we need to produce more food but what forms will this intensification take?

Biodynamic, Organic and Natural Winemaking

Britt and Per Karlsson

Floris Books 2014, 261 pp., £14.99, p/b.

Following Nicolas Joly's book on biodynamic wine a few years ago, this new book is a definitive and beautifully illustrated guide by two Swedes running their own business in Paris. It is not in itself an argument for organic wine production but rather explains what the various concepts mean within the context of different forms of agriculture. It describes the history of European vineyards and the emergence of organic winegrowing, where Spain, Italy and France are the largest producers. Interestingly, total organic hectares rose from 160,000 in 2010 to 260,000 by 2012 - and surely much more today as so many producers are converting after appreciating the importance of terroir and conserving the quality of their soil. In France, this represents 8% of planted area. The authors describe the nuts and bolts of organic winegrowing including pest control by natural means. They also explain how to go organic and the practicalities of biodynamic wine production with its special composts and respect for the cycles of nature. There are also chapters on work inside the cellar, additives, sustainable winegrowing in leading countries and a final chapter on the environmental big picture. At the end, there is a glossary of their favourite natural wine, organic and biodynamic wine producers, among whom I recognised a few names, for instance Pontet-

Canet. In this context, Melanie Tesseron remarked that "with biodynamic you protect instead of cure, and you get a better fruit in the wine. And a fruity wine does not need any make-up."

When Wine Tastes Best 2015

Matthias Thun

Floris Books 2014, 48 pp., £3.99, p/b.

This companion volume is now in its third year and is based on the same biodynamic principles. It is now also available as an app on I-Tunes. There are four elements at play, namely flower, leaf, fruit, and root. Fruit and flower days are the best for wine drinking, while leaf and root should be avoided. Interestingly, older wine can be drunk on leaf days. Many wine merchants and supermarkets are already familiar with this approach, and pick suitable days for their tastings. On a more mundane level, it may help one plan the best days for dinner parties. This edition also contains a nice article on biodynamic wine tasting.

DEATH AND DYING

The Death View Revolution

Madelaine Lawrence

White Crow Books 2014, 237 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'a guide to transpersonal experiences surrounding death', this book draws on extensive research in the field over the last 20 years, arguing that a new view of death beyond the hypothesis of extinction is required by the accumulated evidence and that this constitutes a revolution in the Kuhnian sense. Indeed the book begins with Kuhn's work and provides its own framework of understanding based on Carl Rogers and consisting of transpersonal approach, attribution theory and neurolinguistics. I found attribution theory a useful approach to the subject in terms of arriving at causal explanations. The book covers the whole field, including near death visits, out of body experiences, near death experiences, deathbed communications and after death experiences, discussing the implications in each case.

Each chapter also tabulates characteristics, helpful communication suggestions and documentation guidance. There is a useful discussion of six levels of evidence, beginning with opinions of authorities and/or reports of experts and individual case reports then moving on to evidence from descriptive or qualitative studies, systematic reviews, prospective studies and then studies that are randomised with appropriate controls. These are each discussed, and it is true to say that much evidence in this field is from the lowest evidence levels. However, the field does present significant challenges where spontaneous cases are involved. There is a separate chapter on the evidence for after effects and a concluding summary looking at transpersonal experiences in their totality. The book as a whole contributes to a more complete understanding of these significant phenomena.

Entertaining Judgment

Greg Garrett

Oxford University Press 2014, 245 pp., £18.99, h/b.

This is a study about afterlife in the popular imagination. It shows how many of our ideas are shaped by art - including film - and literature, whether contemporary or from previous eras. Given his background as a professor involved in teaching fiction, screenwriting and popular culture as well as theology, the author is able to bring together a remarkable range of illustrative material. Some of this will be more recognisable to readers such as Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings and Paradise Lost. After an initial introduction, the book proceeds to the in-between realm of legends, ghosts and vampires before looking at the denizens of the afterlife - angels and demons and the devil, all as understood by art and literature, with the occasional contribution from theology. Subsequent chapters examine images for heaven, hell and purgatory - this chapter includes the trials of Job and Schindler's list. The author remarks that purgatory is perhaps our primal plot in that through suffering and trial we reach the fates we are supposed to achieve. These stories feed into our quest into ultimate questions and assure us that the universe has overarching meaning and order, even if this is not immediately apparent. Narratives of near-death experiences are mentioned, but there with no reference to the literature from post-mortem sources nor to Swedenborg, who wrote and extensive treatise, based on his own experience, on Heaven and Hell. Nevertheless, this is a highly engaging journey.

The Top Ten Things Dead People Want to Tell You

Mike Dooley

Hay House 2014, 215 pp., £10.99, p/b.

Mike Dooley was a tax consultant with PricewaterhouseCoopers, but has now turned his attention to spiritual accounting. As the title suggests, there are 10 chapters, each with a key message gleaned from a number of sources listed in recommended reading at the back of the book. It is clear from the content of the book that Mike has picked up many essential points that are also relayed in mediumistic communications as well as near death and mystical experiences. However, his philosophy draws on Seth, Hermann Hesse's *Siddartha*, Neale Donald Walsch, Robert Monroe, Raymond Moody, Ramtha, Wallace Wattles, Kahlil Gibran and Rhonda Byrne. He starts by connecting the dots and asserting that life is about loving, being loved and pursuing happiness - this does not exclude creating, learning and serving. A fundamental message is that our consciousness is not extinguished at bodily death.

Each chapter conveys a basic point that is reinforced at the end by a sample letter from a recently deceased person; none of this is verbatim, but rather compiled on the basis of the author's understanding. In dealing with suicide, I felt that he did not fully embrace the difficulties but at the same time he put the issue within a helpful wider context. Perhaps an even more basic message from the book is that thoughts become things (TBT), the subject of chapter 6 (and see especially p. 156). Unfortunately, many people are completely ignorant of their deeper nature and of the implications of survival and serial lives, which makes them very unprepared for death. This is where the real strength of this book lies, that between two covers one can acquire a sound philosophy of life and an understanding of the deeper nature of both life and death; and in the light of this, one can potentially live a more intelligent, conscious and aware life.

Dead Men Talking

Michael Tymn

White Crow Books 2015, 138 pp., £12.99, p/b.

On the centenary of World War I, this is a timely book about afterlife communication from soldiers who died in that war. That period saw an understandable rise in the popularity of Spiritualism, but there were many serious investigators from the SPR also researching survival, including Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir William Barrett, both Fellows of the Royal Society, and the author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Lodge, quoted at the beginning of the book as saying that death is a transition, a natural process of emancipation of the soul from the body, lost one of his own sons, Raymond, in the conflict. This is also the title of a famous book featured in the first chapter here. The preface and introduction explain the context of this kind of communication and individual chapters give detail of the sittings or messages along with editorial commentary. Claude Kelway-Bamber (a name from my school days) was shot down in November 1915 and gives a vivid description of his death and its aftermath in a book written by his mother. Towards the end, there is a section on psychic phenomena and war, including a New Zealand foot soldier who correctly dreamt that he would be shot through the head on June 25, 1915. There is much material for reflection in this well edited book.

The Heart of the Hereafter

Marcia Brennan

Axis Mundi Books (John Hunt) 2014, 120 pp., $14.95, p/b.

Marcia Brennan is a professor of art history and religious studies in Texas who has also been artist in residence in palliative medicine at a cancer centre. This beautiful book describes her experiences with 10 patients. She begins by observing that we no longer have an Ars Moriendi as in mediaeval times, hence much less idea of what a good death consists of. The encounters are all moving in their own way, as a result of which she writes a poem that is then illustrated in a line drawing by Lyn Smallwood. The result is striking, and many patients recognise that she has captured something essential about their lives and loves. There is a touching account of a couple who have been devoted to each other for many years, and the husband is dying. The poem is entitled The Other Side of the Waterfall and the last few lines are as follows:

Once we went high up in the mountains

And we were sitting together

On the other side of a waterfall.

As we sat there looking out of the falling water

I knew that this was what I always wanted.

And then I knew what it meant to be truly in love.

She ends the book by suggesting that 'the end of life represents a critical juncture that allows us to feel the extraordinary intensity of the love that is in you and in me and everyone. Such love both touches and transcends our lives, just as it seems to continue with a life and power all its own.

Bava's Gift

Michael Urheber

ICRL Press 2014, 156 pp., $12.95, p/b.

This is a touching story that begins with the sudden death of the author's close friend Frank Bava. A few days later, he hears a sound coming from his washing machine and realises that it is a marble belonging to his friend. He decides to return it, and puts it in the suit pocket inside his casket with the thought that Frank could prove his survival by manifesting the marble in a different place. And this is exactly what begins to happen, first to some close friends, then to his colleagues then even, indirectly, to colleagues of the author. In one case, the author is prompted to ask a friend if he had happened to find a marble in the last few months, which prompts an extraordinary story; in another, it links in with a message from a work colleague's deceased father. Cumulatively, the story stretches the long arm of coincidence so far that it becomes persuasive evidence for Frank's survival. Not that every reader will be convinced. There is also one other incident soon after Frank's death where a work colleague was calling up a directory of names and the file disappeared so that only Frank's name came up on the screen. This freaked her out. When she restarted the computer, the file came up as usual. Reflecting on the implications of these experiences, the author affirms that nature is in constant communication with us and that the universe will play lovingly and lightly with us if we approach it in the same spirit; and that we are energetically knitted to the subtle fabric of everything we touch via our minds and bodies. It is a message of deep interconnectedness and continuity.

GENERAL

The Smile Revolution

Colin Jones

Oxford University Press 2014, 183 pp., £22.99, h/b.

On the cover of this entertaining and highly readable work of cultural history relating to 18th-century Paris there is a reproduction of painting by Madame Vigée Lebrun depicting herself smiling and holding her daughter. Little would the unsuspecting reader think that such a painting could have caused such a scandal in the salon of 1787 because the artist was smiling and showing her teeth. It was literally frowned upon to smile, especially if one came from a more aristocratic background and was following the example of Louis XIV. One discovers that there is a very good reason for this protocol, namely that, under what the author calls the old regime of teeth, most people lost them before the age of 40 – hence the politeness of 'facial immobility'. This included the king himself, portrayed (toothless) by Rigaud around 1700.

All this changed during the 18th century as people came to express their feelings in a new way and the 'smile of sensibility' was born along with scientific dentistry. The pioneer here was Pierre Fauchard, born in 1678 and who produced his Magnum Opus in 1728, initiating an era of professional dentistry beyond itinerant tooth pullers. It is astonishing to learn that the only previous systematic works dated back to 1679 and 1582. Paris became the centre not only of culture, but also of dentistry, at least up to the French Revolution. The Terror literally wiped the smile off people's faces and professional dentists disappeared; over time, the white-toothed smile became a feature of feminine beauty while men remained of more serious demeanour. Initially, the development of photography required such long exposures that the smile is less common, but one does see it in portraits of Emerson, for example. This is the benign smile rather than the earlier French smile of disdain. And even in our own time, the smile is highly profitable for the dental industry. This entertaining and instructive book opens up a surprising cultural history not only of the smile but also of the expression of emotions.

Temenos Academy Review 2014

John Carey (ed)

Temenos Academy 2014, 269 pp., no price given – contact Stephen Overy spo@temenos.myzen.co.uk

The Temenos Academy Review contains the usual feast of articles, of poems and reviews. Among the items that especially caught my attention was Joseph Milne on the heavenly order and the lawful society, Raimon Panikkar on spirituality, the way to live, and an interview with Brother John Martin Sahajananda, a former colleague of Bede Griffiths. Panikkar makes the important point that spirituality must be based on more than the individual *soma* and *psyche*, but must also include *polis* and *kosmos* - everything is a totality so spirituality should be integral without neglecting any aspect of reality. Brother John Martin talks about how he met Father Bede and how he bases his life on the vision of Christ rather than historical Christianity. He has a beautiful explanation of one of the I Am sayings by Jesus by relating it to the different parts of a tree. He also sees atheism as playing an important role in the evolution of religion by purging some of the historical aspects.

Given the death of Sir John Tavener at the end of last year, it was very good to see of a fine obituary by Ian Skelly as well as an essay on composition by Sir John himself and another on spiritual traditions in his work. I loved the story from 2008 when he was thought to be brain-dead and his wife arrived with a CD of Mozart to find her husband in a deep coma. As soon as the music began, his hand began conducting it in the air. Composing sacred music requires a completely different attitude on the part of the artist, the very opposite of self-expression. Icon painters and early composers of Orthodox chants were unknown; they were steeped in a tradition

of which they became an instrument. Sir John understood himself to be in the same position, becoming transparent so that music literally flowed through him. His inner world had to be animated by God. Lastly, I very much enjoyed Rupert Sheldrake's review of *The Intuitive Way of Knowing*, which is a tribute to Brian Goodwin as well as of a discussion of the commonalities and differences between them.

Aha!

William B. Irvine

Oxford University Press 2015, 362 pp., $24.95, h/b.

Building on his earlier work on desire, and especially the relationship between the conscious and unconscious mind, this fascinating study sheds light on moments of insight in religion, morality, science, mathematics and the arts. It addresses the questions of what it is like to have an aha moment, what process or activity precedes such a moment, what brain processes are involved, how a person responds to the experience, how the world responds and how the person deals with this response. Each section covers a variety of aha moments, examines their psychology and neuroscience and finally explores the world's resistance to new ideas and how this may be overcome. There are many intriguing examples in the different domains, citing Joseph Smith, Gandhi, Thomas Clarkson, Einstein, Alfred Russel Wallace, Lynn Margulis and many others. In the case of morality, the author draws a distinction between people driven by their moral sense as compared with moral reasoning. He illustrates our lack of moral consistency with reference to vegetarianism, and highlights the resistance we feel towards moral reformers trying to change our views. We are also motivated, probably more than we admit, by the need for approval and security.

In the case of science and mathematics, the unconscious mind needs to be primed by the conscious mind researching the question and dwelling on the issue. There are parallels here between science and mathematics, with the four-stage process of preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. Often, a new finding that challenges the existing paradigm may require real courage to publish, but equally, failing to publish may involve handing the priority to someone else. Readers will remember that Darwin was prompted by a letter from Wallace to formulate and publish his own views. In many cases, pioneers have to deal with rejection and ridicule: one example is the reaction of Eddington to a paper by Chandrasekhar on black holes. Artists need to be able to manage their muse and also defend their new offerings that the public may reject by asking - often justifiably - if it really is art? Within the wider context of the evolution of the brain, the author speculates that improved nutrition was an important factor in enhancing brain development and therefore our capacity to innovate. His philosophical position made him interpret visions in near death experiences as a manifestation of the reptilian brain, with which many readers will disagree. He also could have cited the work of Arthur Koestler on the act of creation and, in the moral sense, the revelation of the principle of reverence for life to Albert Schweitzer on the Ogowe River. However, the book is a rich and informative resource.

Cryptogram

Michael Tobert (SMN)

Cosmic Egg Books (John Hunt) 2014, 222 pp., £9.99, p/b.

I must declare an interest in the genesis of this book, having had a few conversations with Michael about the Cathars and reincarnation, which forms the background of this intriguing and very well written novel where 'the past is never past.' The scenes alternate between northern Europe in 2050 under the shadow of an arms dealer Porphyrian and 13th century Languedoc, where the Inquisition was set up in 1233. The three central characters, who are also lovers, are Stephen, Suzanna and Rokas, and their current situation and relationships are inextricably bound – even by birthmarks in Suzanna's case - to their past lives 800 years before. This sets the scene for a complex interweaving of parallel lives, hidden motives and looping outcomes that refer backwards and forwards as the plot unfolds. In each era there are challenging moral dilemmas and decisions that affect the very lives of these characters. There is corruption within the Church, exemplified by a priest who takes advantage of young women, including Suzanna, but is burned at the stake, as she also is a little later on under the auspices of one of the other main characters. These are gruesome scenes, best not read late at night. The reader is drawn along by the vivid narratives and is able gradually to piece together the many connections between the two sets of lives, and the whole is enhanced by a series of short stories shedding further light on the dynamics of the plot. I don't want to give away any more in a short review, but I found myself wholly immersed in the parallel stories and stimulated by the issues raised as well as enjoying the sheer quality of the writing.

Once Upon a Time

Marina Warner

Oxford University Press 2014, 201 pp. £10.99, h/b.

This fascinating book, as the title might suggest, is a short history of the fairy tale. The author begins by defining its various characteristics before embarking on their history and the relationship of the genre to oral and popular traditions. She evokes the various scenarios and processes embodied in the fairy tale and its relationship to real life. The publication of Grimm's collection in 1812 was a landmark event consisting of 86 stories and published in an edition of 600 with a huge apparatus of notes running to hundreds of pages. It was designed to affirm emerging German identity, which meant that some stories from other origins had to be removed by the time the final Standard Edition appeared in 1857 with 210 tales. Interestingly, it is the most widely translated work in the world after the Bible and the Koran, rendered into more than 160 languages. One interesting chapter considers the views of Bruno Bettelheim with his psychoanalytic interpretation of these tales that have since appeared as cinema and even dance. In the epilogue, the author quotes Paula Fox as asking her grandmother about the difference between a story and a lie, to which her reply is that a lie hides the truth, a story tries to find it - a fitting epitaph to the power of fairy tales.

Orbs and Beyond

Katie Hall and John Pickering

Sixth Books (John Hunt) 2015, 213 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Many readers will have seen images of orbs on various photographs over the last few years, and will no doubt have heard various theories to explain them, including dust on the lens. This book makes it clear that such superficial and sceptical explanations are usually insufficient to explain the range of visual phenomena, which are well illustrated in this book. One of the most interesting features is that the orbs and their appearance seemed to be interactive, responding to human intention and thoughts, sometimes in a synchronistic way. For instance, one guest joked that he would be more impressed if a photograph contained a roomful of orbs, which is exactly what happened on the very next shot. The photographs also seem to show other beings of light - this all points to a hidden dimension of reality interacting with the physical. The authors speculate that the orbs may be symbols of oneness, and they themselves are Unitarians. In terms of theory, they refer to the interesting work on reciprocal systems by Dewey B Larson that posits a universe of motion rather than matter. In any event, there is certainly more than meets the eye to this phenomenon. The book could have done with tighter editing, with errors like lightening instead of lightning and a misuse of the singular and plural of the word phenomenon. It nevertheless gives a fascinating insight into orbs.


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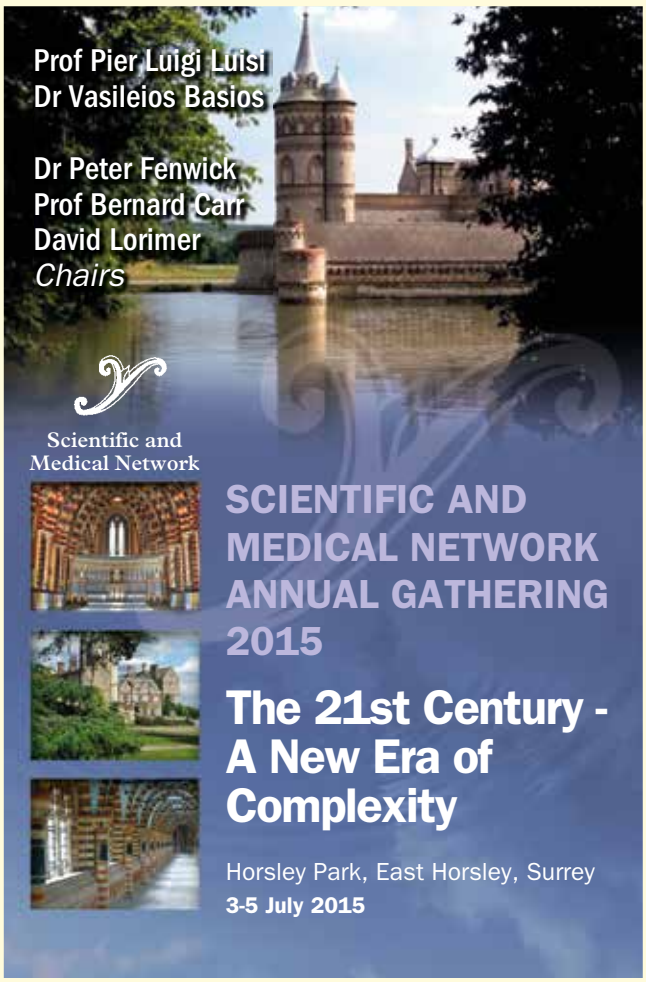
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