



books in brief

David Lorimer

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

SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Super Co-operators

Martin Nowak and Roger Highfield

Canongate 2011, 330 pp., £20, h/b.

This is a highly readable account of a very significant area of scientific research with important social implications. Subtitled 'evolution, altruism in human behaviour or why we need each other to succeed', the book ranges across a wide area, especially the interface between competition and cooperation, selfishness and altruism. The authors go beyond the definition of cooperation as working towards a common aim by specifying that would-be competitors try to help each other instead. They mention Kropotkin and his idea of mutual aid at the beginning of the book as a forerunner of their approach, insisting that cooperation rather than competition underpins innovation and is 'the master architect of evolution.' The challenges we face cannot be solved by technology alone but rather require new levels of cooperative endeavour – super-cooperation based on our extraordinary powers of language and communication that can take us to the next level of evolution. Indeed this is necessary for our very survival as a species.

The starting point of the book is the prisoner's dilemma and five ways of solving it: direct reciprocity, indirect reciprocity, spatial games, group selection and kin selection. Evolution demonstrates many examples of cooperation, both within bodies and socially, for instance in ant colonies. There is an extensive discussion of the implications of the tragedy of the commons, highlighting the importance of celebrating individual contributions to resolving conflicts in the common good. This will give people the sense that their contributions can make a difference. People can also enhance their reputation in this way. Clubs are instituted as a means of harnessing cooperation, and more recently networks have taken this further. In the final chapter, Crescendo of Cooperation, Nowak brings to bear his appreciation of Mahler's music in its ambition to mirror the world. The authors restate the mechanics of cooperation in terms of the earlier chapters and we come back to Mahler's third Symphony as a key work and his hope that in his music "nature in its totality may ring and resound." This quest is continued in *Das Lied von der Erde* with its message of death and rebirth, of the 'tension between the dark pursuit of selfish short-term interests and the shining example of striving towards collective long-term goals.' The authors propose 'natural cooperation' as an addition to natural selection as a way of highlighting the necessity for humans to move to the next evolutionary stage. Interestingly, this is exactly the message of Elisabet Sahtouris, whose work is not mentioned in these pages. Taken in parallel with recent work on empathy and compassion, these studies represent a step forward in human understanding and evolution.

Molecular Consciousness

by Francoise Tibika

Park Street Press 2010, 133 pp., p/b.

This book maintains that the molecules of living organisms are in constant communication, which forms another layer of interconnectedness that is also related to our states of mind. As a chemist, the author attributed central role to the laws governing molecules, which produces an understanding of mind from bottom up. The reader is introduced to the fundamental laws of matter and the ways in which these have been reinterpreted through quantum theory. These levels of information and communication are all means of overcoming a sense of separation and achieving a greater sense of coherence, a condition highlighted by the psychologist Erich Fromm. The finishing point is the realisation that our choice of attitude entails a choice of emotions that can in turn interact with our molecules. In this way, the author tries to overcome the traditional dichotomy between mind and matter, building on the work of David Bohm.

Forging a Human Future

by Erika Erdmann

Rock's Mills Press 2012, 118 pp., p/b.

Erika Erdmann was the editor of a periodical that used to be on our exchange list - *Humankind Advancing*. She died in 2006 at the age of 87, active to the end. Her main inspiration was the neuroscientist Roger Sperry, whose concepts of downward causation and emergence are also key themes of Erika's work, to which she adds the importance of fusing love and reason - feeling and thinking - for a constructive human future. The editor provides an illuminating biographical memoir, describing the decade in which she worked with Sperry. An important difference between them was Erika's emphasis on cooperation as well as competition. Her vision is clearheaded: despite the fact that love and compassion have been preached the centuries in the West, we are still subject to corruption and organised crime. Hence love and compassion are not enough. Moreover, as Sorokin also observed, violence can never lead to justice; what is required is a combination of love and concern with reason and insight in pursuit of our highest aspirations. We must be ready to move on from previous systems of thought that have outlived their usefulness and base our actions on key values such as 'wisdom, mental maturity, open-mindedness, and well-informed concern for humankind.' The book conveys Erika's visionary thinking and is a timely reminder of perennial priorities.

MEDICINE/HEALTH

Defy Gravity

by **Caroline Myss**

Myss - Hay House, 250 pp. \$15.95, p/b

Subtitled 'healing beyond the bounds of reason', this book takes the reader into the depths of human experience, suffering and development as people die and are reborn in the cycles of their lives. We cannot always find rational reasons for what happens to us, and often have to plunge into the mystery in order to live into a new breakthrough. Mystics are used to living with paradox, and Caroline recounts many experiences of this kind. The structure of the book addresses five truths about healing: the fact that you cannot reason with illness, crisis or God, the need to connect with meaning and purpose, how to navigate in a courageous fashion the dark night of the soul, the need to rely on the power of Graces, and how we can ultimately defy gravity and learn to reason like a mystic.

The book contains many moving stories that pose questions about simplistic interpretations of illness and healing. The reader is invited to consider these issues in a more personal way by relating the stories to their own experience. An important theme is connection with one's feelings about a situation or illness as a way of penetrating into the underlying meaning or pattern that it represents. We are also invited to examine the consistency between our values and our conduct. The heart of the crisis brings people into the dark night of the soul as part of the healing journey. Here Caroline connects St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila through their own mystical writings. She goes through the seven almost inescapable passions/vices of pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. It is here that grace provides an essential release beyond a superficial self-reliance: reverence, purity, understanding, fortitude, counsel, knowledge and wisdom; there is advice about how to connect with these principles and prayers for their realisation. There is also a brilliant articulation of the essential principles of oneness, forgiveness, truth and thought; I was struck by the observation that all experience is impersonal, and that it is our interpretation that personalises it. At the end of the book, Caroline lists five mystical laws: there is only now, forgiveness is essential, all is illusion, trust in paradox, irony and synchronicity, and maintain spiritual congruency. In summary, this profound and perceptive book is about the development of depth through profound reflection on our experience of the human condition.

Spiritual Medicine

by **Cissi Williams**

O Books 2013, 88 pp., £9.99, p/b.

A book from the soul level of the author that starts from the premise that the ego has become too separate from the soul, and that it is necessary to take spiritual potions in order to remedy the situation. There are seven: silencing your mind, simplifying your life, a spiritual life detox, following your heart's wisdom, trusting a loving universe, becoming your true spiritual self, and surrendering your life to the divine. There is then a more detailed plan about how to implement this. The story about how the book came about is itself a remarkable transformation beginning from the reading of important books and then retraining in osteopathy and NLP culminating in loving service. I particularly liked Caroline Myss's prayer from St Teresa of Avila: 'dear God, let nothing disturb the silence of my moment with you. Let me just be peaceful so that I can sit in grace. Let me just be still here in this moment with you.' This enables the soul to flow through the mind. The message is simple, practical and profound.

The Natural Medicine Guide to Autism

by **Stephanie Marohn**

Hampton Roads Publishing Company Inc 2012, 290 pp., \$14.99, p/b.

An important and authoritative book on this controversial subject. Most readers will be familiar with the hounding of Dr Andrew Wakefield by the medical establishment. Here one can understand better the background to the controversy. The prevalence of autism in countries such as the US and the UK has increased sharply over the last 10 years. Interestingly, 189 books related to autism were published in 2002, while the number of new books in 2011 totalled 638. Autism-related legal claims have reached a total of 5,637 in the US. In the last two decades, prevalence has risen from 4.5 births per 10,000 to between 45 and 68 per 10,000. Causes and contributing factors are multiple, almost certainly increasing chemical toxins, immune dysfunction, allergies and sensitivities, food additives and nutritional deficiencies as well as vaccines. The global market for vaccines has increased enormously over the last 10 years: in 2001, it was \$7 billion and is currently \$23.8 billion. This is a staggering increase and an equally staggering amount of money, which enables one to understand the political and economic implications of the Wakefield research. The first part of the book covers the basics of autism, while the second discusses a wide range of possible treatments that may suit individual cases. The term natural medicine means working with rather than against the body and interventions seek to restore the balance of the body rather than using surface palliative measures. The approaches described can help remove some of the triggers for autism and lead to a correspondingly better quality-of-life.

Spoon River Revisited

by **Daniel J. Benor (SMN)**

Wholistic Healing Publications 2012, 179 pp., p/b. See www.wholistichealingresearch.com

Few readers will be acquainted with the inspiration of this intriguing book, *The Spoon River Anthology* by Edgar Lee Masters, published nearly 100 years ago. It is a series of fictional epitaphs in the form of autobiographical prose poems. Dan is a medical doctor and healer who takes a wholistic approach and is highly critical of the excesses of the US medical system that is currently the third leading cause of death - amounting to 250,000 people - after cancers and heart disease. Given a different medical philosophy, one could be naturally indignant at this little appreciated statistic and the vast profits made by pharmaceutical companies. To this one can add 350,000 adverse drug reactions and the fact that pharmaceutical companies are actively engaged in undermining natural approaches to health. Each chapter contains a short introduction to the topic before a number of case histories formatted as prose poems. The very simplicity and straightforwardness of the narratives heighten their impact and touch the heart. They also serve as a timely warning and introduce a number of safer and more effective modalities.

Practical Miracles

by **Arielle Essex**

Hay House 2013, 273 pp., £12.99, p/b.

This book had its origins in the crisis faced by the author when she discovered that she had a brain tumour and decided to opt out of medical treatment on the basis that she could heal herself by resolving the stress responses in her life reflected in some of our core beliefs. This led her to explore a number of avenues, including NLP, as a way of disentangling her thoughts and restoring a degree of inner peace. The key message is to heal your thinking in order to transform your stress response. This means not allowing outside events to trigger your emotions. At the beginning of the book, the author explains that the main thrust is to remove the blocks to your natural healing power, opening up to connection and trust through a

change in belief structure and consciousness. She provides some helpful guidance and exercises about how to reverse a feeling of being overwhelmed and not allowing oneself to descend into a negative stress spiral. She has a useful model of cloud components involving the relationship between such factors as stories, values, emotions and key phrases to our core beliefs. Overall, the book can help readers make choices that heal and build resilience.

All is Well

by Louise L. Hay & Mona Lisa Schultz

Hay House Publishers 2013, 249 pp., £10.99, p/b.

This book is about healing the body with medicine, affirmations and intuition. Many readers will be familiar with the work of Louise Hay, and in this instance Mona Lisa Schultz adds a good deal more background scientific research, along with relevant case studies. She recounts her own experience as a young doctor receiving advance intuitive knowledge of the patients she was about to treat. After a few trials, she learned to respect these messages and those of the body in general. We need to pay attention to the messages sent by the body through intuition. The process also involves becoming conscious of emotions and accompanying thoughts as well as identifying symptoms of distress and locating them in our bodies. This gives a fuller understanding of the genesis of illness. The book is structured around the seven emotional centres so that readers can home in on their own symptoms and use the corresponding affirmations to be found at the end of the book.

PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION

Wisdom Seekers

by Nevill Drury

O Books 2011, 303 pp., £11.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'the rise of the new spirituality', this is a remarkably comprehensive overview of the field, which also serves as a general introduction to many significant thinkers and important trends of thought. At the outset, the author reflects that the new age movement may be the future face of Western religion as a 'fusion of experiential and transformative spiritual practices grounded in the perennial wisdom traditions of both East and West.' This is of course a stark contrast to the attitudes of regressive fundamentalism. It also embraces new insights in science and psychology while transcending sceptical materialism. Interestingly, the book begins with Swedenborg, who is followed by Mesmer, Blavatsky and Gurdjieff. Next comes psychology with William James, Freud, Jung, Adler and Reich. The development of the transpersonal movement is described with variations including Maslow, Perls, Murphy; then the role of psychedelics with Huxley, Watts, Leary and the flower power of the 1960s.

The holistic perspective features psychosomatic aspects of disease and the self-help movement including Maxwell Maltz, who started as a plastic surgeon before realising the key importance of self-image and going on to found Psychocybernetics. There are also sections on channelling, meditation, mythology and feminism. The relationship between science and spirituality is discussed, including the work of James Lovelock, Rupert Sheldrake, Ken Wilber and David Bohm. As those of us in the field are aware, the understanding of death has also been transformed by people such as Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Ian Stevenson and Robert Monroe. I have recommended that my daughter, who intends to read psychology, reads this book to give a wider context to her study, and it can be recommended to curious and intelligent young people. The movement as a whole is important in supplementing existing scientific understanding and developing a living spirituality, all within a perspective of unity

and diversity. We are engaged in the important process of widening horizons and acquiring a more global perspective, perhaps even in formulating a wisdom society. This book is an significant guide to this overall process.

Rationality + Consciousness = Free Will

by David Hodgson (SMN)

Oxford 2012, 267 pp., £40, h/b.

David Hodgson, who died recently, was a Supreme Court judge who also made important contributions to philosophy. It is a tribute to his power of concentration that he was able to write such a masterly technical book on his commute to and from work. His basic contention is that the nature of human rationality and consciousness endows us with free will so that our thoughts and actions are not determined by the laws of nature or mathematics. This position has important implications for his work as a judge and for the philosophy of the relationship between responsibility and punishment. He sets his argument out systematically in a series of chapters examining foundational beliefs, truth and rationality, plausible reasoning, consciousness and decision-making, neuroscience and conscious choice, value judgements and responsibility and retribution. He builds his case cumulatively, summarising key propositions at the end of each chapter, which makes the argument simple to follow. He deals extensively with complex issues in philosophy and neuroscience, while rejecting a simplistic and deterministic interpretation. The nature of value judgements is key to his argument, and he articulates a number of natural moral imperatives that underpin both law and human behaviour. These are reasonable generalisations that people from different cultures could recognise and readily accept, including doing no harm, acting justly and honestly, fulfilling commitments and acting in a life-affirming way. The book is a robust statement that forms a fitting tribute to a lifetime of philosophical endeavour and is accessible to non-technical readers well as professional philosophers.

The Waning of Materialism

edited by Robert C. Koons and George Bealer

Oxford 2010, 490 pp., £26, h/b.

Given the pervasive influence of materialism in the Academy, the title of this book might initially come as something of a surprise. It is written by 23 philosophers who argue the case against materialism covering a number of approaches including arguments from conscious experience, unity and identity, intentionality and mental causation. The last part explains various alternatives to materialism. Right at the beginning of the book, the editors point out that prominent philosophers have had serious misgivings about the ultimate viability of materialism, but for many different reasons. There are of course quite a number of forms of materialism, including reductive and eliminative materialism and, more recently, supervenience. The papers are aimed more at technical philosophers, but some are accessible to the informed layman. A pervasive theme is that functionalism cannot provide an adequate account of qualia in conscious experience or of intentionality. This leads some writers to propose a property dualism. Looking through the bibliography, CD Broad and HH Price are nowhere to be seen. These contemporaries had the courage to incorporate the findings of psychical research into their philosophy. Despite its relevance to the undermining of materialism, this whole area is missing from the book, which is hardly surprising. However, it is interesting that such a volume has nevertheless appeared and that students will be exposed to a rigorous questioning of positions that are frequently taken for granted and passed on to the next generation without any examination of the presuppositions involved.

The Golden Laws

by Ryuho Okawa

Lantern Books 2002, 229 pp., \$16, p/b.

This book is the second in a trilogy including *The Laws of Eternity* and *The Laws of the Sun*, which I reviewed in the mid-1990s. The author may be unfamiliar to many readers. He is a remarkable teacher on a par with Rudolf Steiner in terms of the range of his thought and insight. He speaks about the eternal Buddha and the great guiding spirits of light who have been present on earth in East and West to help take humanity to the next stage of spiritual development. The Real World is the spiritual realm, which he divides into dimensions reaching up to the Ninth from the Third, which represents Earth. The object of life is to develop the light and love within, and the overall aim of the book is to present a spiritual history of mankind and prospects for the future. Okawa explains that his esoteric knowledge comes from the fact that 80% of his soul still resides in the ninth dimension, in a similar way to Steiner and Swedenborg, who could also travel inter-dimensionally.

His history of spiritual philosophy and corresponding reincarnations is fascinating: he claims that Plato became Hegel, Marcus Aurelius Rousseau, Augustine Heidegger, Seneca Schopenhauer, and that Sir Thomas More had been Solomon, Kant Daniel and Sir Francis Bacon Xenophon. At the very least, this is an interesting thought experiment, and is projected into the future when it is explained that Confucius will reincarnate in the 23rd century and Luther in the 24th. The fate of Karl Marx, who had been Epicurus, is claimed to be grim, and the reader is encouraged to remember the importance of spiritual development. Nor surprisingly, Japan is said to play a key role in the period after 2020. Overall, the book gives a remarkable spiritual history and prospect of mankind, and is authoritative in its tone in spite of the fact that some readers will find his views unpalatable in a permissive age.

The Meditation Lifestyle

by Colum Hayward

Polair Publishing 2012, 144 pp., p/b.

Many readers will have a practice of meditation, and this book will help you go beyond that practice to enrich your experience of living. Based on the experience of 30 years of teaching, the structure of the book addresses a number of themes such as strength, beauty, happiness, energy, health and wholeness. The introduction by businessman David Barclay stresses that meditation is for busy people as a means of addressing the dangers of this very busyness by giving the brain a break and discovering a sense of contentment. The author assumes that meditation is in fact a constant activity and provides many useful exercises. After all, the quality of our everyday state of mind is critical to our sense of wellbeing. It also puts us in touch with the deeper silence that helps us develop a real presence, which the author illustrates with a story about a radiant Buddhist monk.

Buddha's Book of Sleep

by Joseph Emet

Hay House Publishers 2012, 141 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Considering that most Buddhist philosophy deals with how to awaken, this is perhaps an unusual title. It is the first time that techniques from mindfulness meditation have been used to address sleep disturbances. It begins by explaining the relevance of such techniques to better sleep, pointing out that worry is a major factor in the insomnia and every meditator will be familiar with the busy mind with its constantly arising thoughts. Thinking (especially negative) and sleeping are incompatible. There is a suggestion in the book that we may also be short of naps rather than sleep. The second part describes seven guided meditation exercises with a text to read in each case. A simple and practical book.

The Art of Living out Loud

by Meg Blackburn Losey

Weiser Publications 2012, 147 pp., \$14.99, p/b.

As the title might suggest, this is an energetic book about dealing with the pitfalls and patterns of everyday life. The author provides some signposts to help readers identify their own repetitive patterns, many of which are grounded in fear. As she says, 'learning to be unafraid frees us to experience our lives to our fullest potential.' The process begins with being honest to ourselves and choosing our responses to situations more consciously; a sense of humour can be indispensable. She provides helpful guidance on relationships, pointing out that their dynamics are a reflection of who we are inside so that each encounter can become a learning experience ('we give our experiences to ourselves'). We can also ask ourselves what we are seeking in others in relationships and try to find what she calls our parent issues that can loom very large. There is a powerful message at the end when the author visited a sacred site with a group. The key is the feeling engendered by the place, but we actually create this feeling ourselves. Then the feeling ripples out into the field as an energy affecting the whole of life. This awareness can encourage us to take a more intentional approach to our lives.

Bio Ethics

by Gilbert Meilaender

Alban Books Ltd 2012 (1996), 133 pp., £10.99, p/b.

This is the third edition of a book designed to give a Christian perspective on many complex modern bioethical questions, many of which have arisen as a result of the rapid progress in modern medicine. A number of important themes inform the Christian view, including the relationship between individual and community, freedom and finitude, person and body and the interpretation of suffering. Among the issues covered are reproduction, abortion, genetic advance, suicide and euthanasia, refusing treatment, organ donation and research on embryos. There is no universal agreement among Christians on these topics, but there are important starting points for reflection. The author has an interesting discussion on compassion in relation to euthanasia, suggesting that the key is maximising care rather than minimising suffering. There is also a balance to be struck between responsibility for our health and compassion for those who are ill. The Christian perspective naturally goes beyond materialism and relativism and sees hope beyond death, once defined by GK Chesterton as the 'power of being cheerful in circumstances we know to be desperate.' A very thoughtful and helpful book.

The Lotus and the Lily

by Janet Conner

Conari Press 2012, 243 pp., £14.99, p/b.

This is a 30-day programme of 'soul writing' designed to deepen one's connection with the Source and derived from the author's own deep experience. The soil of the soul needs to be nourished for seeds to germinate and this requires a shift from an ego centred focus on the law of attraction to one that puts the divine at the centre, aligning with one's purpose and allowing life to unfold. Like many books of this kind, they originate in a life crisis that the author succeeded in resolving. After the introduction, each day is set out in the same way, with an initial passage followed by reflection, writing and exploration. The introduction also explains the 12 foundational truths behind the book, including the search for bigger questions, the importance of intention and gratitude, and the fact that the essence of what we want is in fact the freedom represented by the object of desire. The mandala plays a central role, both in terms of the circle and the unfolding sequence represented by the golden spiral representing both formation and transformation. It also forms a bridge between the conscious and unconscious aspects of the self.

The Magdalen Manuscript**by Tom Kenyon and Judi Sion***ORB Communications 2002, 321 pp., p/b (o/p)*

A friend recommended this book as having shed light on her own alchemical and transformational process. Recent books and films have recast our understanding of Mary Magdalene, and I remember very clearly my visits to the Sainte Baume Cave some 20 years ago. Somewhat to the discomfiture of the author, the book is channelled, but its truths have to stand up to independent scrutiny, which the reader will need to provide. 'Mary' explains that she was an initiate of the Temple of Isis and as such a practitioner of sexual alchemy whose underlying purpose is to help create the light body that sustains life after death. Alchemy requires the containment of energy for its transformation, and this is essentially a feminine ability of using energy to open up to deeper levels of consciousness through an act of surrender. The underlying process is one of divinisation or theosis also associated with gnosis or higher knowledge. Ultimately, this is a marriage of masculine and feminine principles. The second and third parts of the book explain the author's understanding of Egyptian alchemy and the personal story of Judi in embodying these transformative energies.

God's Favourite Colour is Tartan**by Tim Firth (SMN)***Tim Firth 2012, 343 pp., £12.50, p/b.*

Based on a lifetime of reading and reflection, this thoughtful and erudite book draws on the author's experience as a Catholic priest and human resources manager who is now active in interfaith work. In the introduction, he explains that he arrived in Rome around the time of Vatican II, and reflects on how this legacy has been set back over the last 25 years. His own crisis of faith in the 1980s has led him to a much more inclusive view, which he sets out in this book: a mind-set of both/and rather than either/or or us/them. In a parable at the beginning of the book he likens the Catholic Church to a castle, which he eventually leaves to wander in the woods with greater freedom and uncertainty. Individual religions are refractions of the relationship between human and divine, which are also rooted in culture. He describes his relationship with Cardinal Basil Hume, who gave the good advice: 'Don't take yourself too seriously. Take life seriously. Take God seriously.'

The first part of the book sets out the both/and way, making the point that we are both one and different, and that there are different ways of approaching this issue. At the end of each chapter, he provides a useful summary of implications pointing in a constructive both/and direction and away from the exclusiveness of either/or. This may involve paradox, as he points out in his observations on Meister Eckhart. He works out his argument in terms of belief, prayer, art, myths and symbols. I think he is right in arguing that there is a paradigm shift in religious thinking towards a both/and approach, which is also reflected in the life of Bede Griffiths.

The second part sets religions in a wider context, showing how they are particular interpretations of a more universal revelation. These become vehicles and frameworks designed to nourish our spirituality, but they are inevitably limited by culture. He explains the twin dangers of divinisation and secularisation, advocating a path of wisdom that includes but transcends reason and a literal approach to spirituality. Many readers will recognise the converging of awareness identified by the author that is reflected in Interfaith and ecumenical work and stands in stark contrast to the dogmatism of fundamentalists. Perhaps the key word in this book is reconciliation, and the author has made a very valuable contribution in articulating his carefully worked out both/and approach.

Should We Live Forever?**by Gilbert Meilaender***Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing 2013, 121 pp., £11.99, p/b.*

Just this morning, I heard a reference to the idea that death might be optional in 100 years time. This book asks if it would be desirable to extend life indefinitely, detaching it from its organic base. What would then become of the relationship between the generations, the stages and shape of life characterised in the Hindu path? Life renews itself, so reincarnation corresponds more closely to what happens in the rest of the organic world. The author uncovers some of the assumptions underlying life extension, including that consciousness is an epiphenomenon that can be simulated on a computer programme, and that there is no essential difference between organisms and mechanisms. An important concept is that of generativity derived from Erik Erikson and which insists that each stage of life provides opportunities to acquire certain strengths as part of growth and development. As an elder, one of our prime responsibilities is the guidance of the next generation. A certain patience is also associated with wisdom, and contemplation has its own place in the journey of life. The book concludes with a profound thought from Pope Benedict XVI when he says that the cure for death is not so much an indefinite prolongation of this current life, but rather the transformation of life from within: 'it would need to create a new life within us, truly fit for eternity.'

God Speaking**by Judith O'Grady***Moon Books 2013, 52 pp., £4.99, p/b.*

This is an unusual book by an author who is a biologist, trance seer and prominent druid. This gives her a multi-dimensional understanding of reality beyond physical appearance. She explores aspects of Irish folklore, new Pagan theology and scientific observations to elaborate a theory about our future. Her insights put her at a sometimes uncomfortable liminal position between the worlds where each camp finds it difficult to accept the perceptions of the other. Trances may be interpreted as wishful thinking, but the interrogator has no experience of these receptive states that open into other worlds and transcend a narrow anthropocentric understanding. The Earth is personified as the anagram Hertha and we are encouraged to think of her as alive and recognise our responsibility of care. Moreover, we each need to establish our own form of communication with Nature and reflect on how we can make our impact less destructive.

The Feeling of What Happens/Smile or Die**by David Lister***Swedenborg Society 2012, 57 pp., p/b.*

This book presents two illustrated lectures by Dr David Lister to the Swedenborg Society and both connected with Swedenborg's work on the brain. The first investigates his speculations on the hypothalamus (then referred to as the Infundibulum) and provides a chart translating Swedenborg's terminology into modern parlance. He explains the model of the triune brain and discusses metaphors for the workings of the brain, adding the interesting thought that metaphor itself may be a form of fourth brain. The second lecture is about Swedenborg's understanding of the cerebellum and unconscious procedural control governing our movements. This is illustrated with gymnastics and ballet. David moves on to explore the role of the cerebellum in temptation or moral choice and in dreams. A final section compares the muscles involved in voluntary and involuntary control of smiles, beautifully illustrated with corresponding photographs of Julia Roberts. These lectures enable one to understand more about the history and anatomy of the brain.

PSYCHOLOGY/PARAPSYCHOLOGY

The Failure of Success**by Jennifer Kavanagh (SMN)***O Books 2012, 139 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

This provocatively titled and stimulating book is about redefining what matters beyond a superficial understanding of success as material, which means that many people cannot by definition achieve it. Many successful people have been through multiple failures and have succeeded against the odds through resilience and persistence. They will often say that it is their failures that have been the stepping-stones to eventual success. Jennifer questions the very definitions of these terms, suggesting, like the Bhagavad-Gita, that we should release the fruits of action in terms of outcomes and aim instead for contentment and a sense of meaning. Ironically, fame brings its own stresses in terms of loss of privacy and constant attention from the press. Samuel Beckett famously said that we should fail again and fail better; as the author shows, failure can be entertaining, and she herself did evening classes in clowning. Failure can also be constructively interpreted as feedback.

Another interesting issue is success and failure within families or between generations. On the one hand, successful parents create high expectations, but on the other they may fail to nurture the special talents of their children who are different from them. Setting goals can be very focusing, but on the other hand we also need flexibility to make course corrections; I agree with Jim Rohn when he states that the main value of goals and achieving them is the person we become in the process. The real agenda is a process of transformation, and the inner dimension is what ultimately counts in terms of our habitual state of mind. As mentioned above, the author emphasises contentment, commenting that this means letting go of any striving for success and control. I think we need a balance here in terms of being content with where we are and who we are while at the same time looking forward to new projects and activities and being open to guidance from within: a life of intention and love.

Evolution of Consciousness**Howard Jones (SMN)***Fairhill Publishing 2012, 277 pp., p/b – see www.spiritofoneness.co.uk*

This is a wide-ranging study of the evolution of religion into modern forms of spirituality and the evidence for psycho-spiritual experiences and universal mind. The central proposition is that the material world is in fact a hologram of consciousness and that the creative inspiration for advance emerges from this universal mind. The author echoes German idealist philosophy reformulated for our time, including the important ideas of Fichte and Schelling. Developments in theology and science are described, especially the implications of quantum physics for a new worldview. The idea of the universal field of consciousness is thoroughly explored, and the author ranges widely over biology and psychology while also drawing on the ideas of David Bohm. He distinguishes between mind and soul, defining the latter as an individual component of a Communal Soul that retains its identity after death. He then brings to bear a range of evidence supporting this contention, including mystical experience, NDEs, OBEs, telepathy and survival of consciousness. Readers open to such data will find that the universal mind theory provides a coherent framework of explanation. However, as the author observes, 'for those who believe, no proof is necessary; for those who don't believe, no proof is possible.' Hence the repeated and continuing attempts over the last hundred years to present the relevant evidence in a coherent form in books that are rarely read by those who need to. However, increasing numbers of people are coming round to the kind of position articulated in this thoughtful book.

Avoidance Doesn't Work**by Iain Scott***HPT Books 2012, 160 pp., £11.99, p/b.*

Iain Scott has written a number of books, but this is the first that I have seen for around 15 years. He writes as a mystic who has been involved in practical conservation work on a large-scale for more than 30 years. Quite apart from the interest of the text, the photographs of African wildlife are stunning, including elephants, rhinoceros, tigers and leopards. He and his team are responsible for a conservation area of some 30,000 acres. His fundamental interest is in the possibility of a process of change and transformation. Consonant with his experience, he advocates unselfish service to others and diagnoses the root of many of our challenges as selfishness in different forms: one for all, and all for one. This is simple but far-reaching. He cites his wife Becky as an extraordinary example of capacity to change if one demands the highest standards from oneself and focuses on making a real difference. We then embody values as a sign of our level of awareness and integrity. We need to start from a realistic assessment based on reason and evidence. Ultimately, it is about what the author calls perspective and approach. Perspective can be either selfish or non-selfish, while approaches represent the attitude of can do or can't do - this removes excuses and helps us focus on action rather than words. The book is a powerful message for our time.

Fail Up**by Tavis Smiley***Hay House Publishers 2010, 263 pp., \$14.95, p/b.*

"Subtitled" 20 lessons on building success from failure, these stories by the American broadcaster Tavis Smiley show how failures can become lessons on which we can subsequently build. His mother was his first teacher when she gave him her pencil with an inscription 'it's hard to be humble when you're as great as I am' and allowed him to draw his own conclusion that bragging about his ability would not endear him to his friends. At the end of each short section there is a takeaway message summarising the lesson to be learned. One instructive chapter discusses the relationship between power and principle and describes the tortured last two years of Martin Luther King's life, when everyone had turned against him. Many politicians follow the policy of permanent interests rather than basing their views on sound principles, but, as Smiley points out, these can come at a price. The greatest lives are those deeply aligned with their principles. Since writing these lines, Margaret Thatcher has died and her funeral took place today. I was struck by the advice given by her father: 'You first sort out what you believe. Then you apply it. You don't compromise on what matters.' The film Lincoln is also an example of the power of principle against prejudice.

Resurrecting Leonora Piper**by Michael Tymn***White Crow Books 2013, 205 pp., p/b.*

Mrs Piper was the most researched medium of 100 years ago, and was investigated by all the leading psychical researchers of her day, including William James, Richard Hodgson, FWH Myers, Sir Oliver Lodge and James Hyslop. These and many others began as sceptics and were convinced by Mrs Piper's demonstrations even if they did not all embrace the spiritist hypothesis - this was especially true of William James, who felt his reputation would be endangered if he publicly admitted this view. Ironically, he himself ostensibly communicated through Mrs Piper after his own death in 1910, and has some interesting things to say about his state. He says he is a conscious being with body of expression and capacities normal and rational, with fewer limitations than he expected.

The material described constitutes William James's White Crow and is remarkable in the persuasive power all the evidence supplied. Richard Hodgson began as an investigator who

subsequently became a communicator after his own early death, thus participating from both sides. I also discovered some sources I did not know about, including a book on Spiritism written by Judge John Edmonds and George Dexter, with claimed messages from Swedenborg and Francis Bacon – the extract from the latter is remarkably eloquent. The other book was by Lady Barrett, herself a dean of a medical school and wife of Sir William Barrett. In one of his messages, Barrett speaks about the separation of the conscious and subconscious mind during physical life, but their coming together again after death, which complicates the matter of communication since only a part of one's mind is able to function; one cannot communicate with one's whole self. The sequence of cases with George Pellew is also very evidential, as he names each of 30 people that he knew when communicating with them. At the end of the book, the author reflects on the five possible explanatory frameworks, with which most readers will be familiar: conscious fraud, unconscious fraud for secondary personality, super-ESP, impostor spirits or spirits who really are who they say they are. He discusses each in turn, and quotes Hyslop at the end in support of the spirit hypothesis after many years of investigation.

Magic Past Lives

by Atasha Fyfe

Hay House Publishers 2013, 284 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Many books on past lives focus on the supposed origins of psychological or physical suffering in a previous existence as a means of both healing and finding meaning in our current circumstances. This book assumes the existence of reincarnation, but focuses instead on empowering episodes revealed in therapy sessions that can help empower an individual in their current incarnation. The material covers a good deal of spiritual territory with example illustrating aspects of shamanism, magic and the implications of belonging to secret societies. There are many vivid narratives and advice on dealing with particular patterns; also vivid evocations of previous eras and pointers towards the development of a more spiritual psychology.

FUTURE STUDIES/ECONOMICS/ ECOLOGY

Enough is Enough

by Rob Dietz & Dan O'Neill

Earthscan Ltd 2013, 240 pp., £12.99, p/b.

The question asked in this book is how we can build a sustainable and steady state economy in a world of finite resources. It builds on the work of Herman Daly and questions the assumption that economic growth as we know it can continue indefinitely. More people are realising the finite nature of the planet and many are proposing practical policies for achieving a steady state economy. However, the will to act has not yet materialised, and may only do so in crisis mode. A steady state economy means not only a stable level of resource consumption, but also a stable population. The use of materials and energy remains within ecological limits, and the overall policy goal is to improve the quality of life. The authors have spelled out what needs to happen in order for this transition to take place. None of these measures is difficult in itself, but there is an overall requirement for the political and economic debate to be reframed. This includes the argument that education is for life, not just for work. The chapters are helpfully structured in analysing what we currently do and what we can do instead. This includes a more equitable distribution of income and wealth, comprehensive monitoring systems, an incremental policy approach, and improved cooperation and coordination across government. The blueprint they provide could form the basis of a new way of looking at long-term policy

(pages 195-6) that also entails a shift in values away from consumerism to sustainability. As highlighted in the previous issue, reform of monetary and financial systems is also crucial and the media can play an important role in stimulating political and economic debate.

Green Equilibrium

by Christopher Wills

Oxford University Press 2013, 280 pp., £20, h/b.

This book is about the vital balance between humans and nature and is based not only on a wide knowledge of molecular genetics and evolution, but also on extensive explorations by the author with his wife all over the world. It is engagingly written, and the reader witnesses some remarkable adventures, including landing on a sloping airstrip high in the mountains. Writing *The Protein Crunch* made me aware of the delicate balances within ecosystems, and the author begins with an example from Tanzania where the suppression of fires in the crater resulting in lush grass appealing to the tourists created the enabling conditions for ticks to multiply and infect the indigenous animals with various diseases. Controlled burns of the crater grasslands succeeded in re-establishing ecosystem equilibrium. So far as the human future is concerned, we need to modify our behaviour as the ruling predator by applying the principles of ecology if we are to halt our exploitation and damage of Earth's ecosystems. We are now in a much better position to understand the interactions of evolutionary pressures, genetic resources, ecological complexity and environmental change that determine the fate of ecosystems. Biodiversity is an important condition of ecological balance and we find that interlocking webs of life confer ecological stability.

Restoration ecology can take advantage of the resilience and adaptive capacity of nature. One significant position is the re-establishment of predator-prey relationships along with grazing and browsing interactions between animals and plants. At a bacterial level, this involves equilibrium between hosts and parasites and a balance of symbiotic species. The author is in no doubt that we have the capacity to heal the world and create a well-balanced home for our species, but the timing is urgent, especially in view of economic exploitation, warfare, poaching and hunting. He makes it clear that there is an important human dimension to this process in the sheer joy of those working in the field to restore damaged ecosystems.

Nature and Culture

by Sarah Pilgrim and Jules Pretty

Earthscan Ltd 2010, 275 pp., £27.99, p/b.

A key insight in this important book is the way in which indigenous cultures are embedded in the ecosystems that they inhabit. As a whole, it highlights the link between cultural and biological diversity and the effect that our cultural assumptions about our relationship to nature have on our environment. If we consider ourselves as separate, then nature can be a resource to exploit for human gain. There is in fact a co-evolutionary process of ecosystems and cultures so that we can understand the need for cultural renewal if we are to transform our dominant attitude towards nature. This in turn implies a science of harmony rather than manipulation. Contexts include interdisciplinary science, landscape, hunting, agriculture and ways of reconnecting humanity with nature where this connection has been lost. The aim is to formulate a new conservation paradigm where policymakers and scientists consider biological and cultural diversity as an interdependent whole. Landscape is arguably the clearest picture of the relationship between human communities and nature, and this in turn embodies certain knowledge bases and cultural belief systems as well as distinctive worldviews, in our case the mechanistic view. We need to understand the drivers of loss of diversity and system degradation and encourage the development of eco-cultures as a path towards resilience.

Fleeing Vesuviusedited by **Richard Douthwaite and Gillian Fallon***Feasta 2010, 417 pp., £17.50, p/b.*

This multi-author book was put together in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and articulates that we are at a turning point in human history where economies may shrink rather than grow due to the fact that the natural resources we need for growth cannot be extracted at the same rate. The main sections cover energy availability, innovation in business, money and finance, new ways of using the land, dealing with climate change, changing the way we live and think, and ideas for action in the form of an emergency plan. Many of our greatest challenges stem from the overuse of fossil fuels and our economic structure means that we have to continue economic growth in order to avoid collapse. Unfortunately, this is unsustainable, so we should be working out how we can reach a steady state position while at the same time considering how we can implement a more equal sharing of resources – this is the idea behind the policy of contraction and convergence. Readers will be familiar with the need for a new mind-set, which is set out in an essay by Patrick Andrews. The final chapter advises on action at a number of different levels - individual, collective, national and international - drawing together many of the strands in the book. Because the emergency is a long one, as James Kunstler puts it, we tend not to be immediately galvanised to take action. Books like this can bring us up to speed on many pressing issues.

The Protein Mythby **David Gerow***Earth Books 2012, 318 pp., £11.99, p/b.*

Some readers may remember my major review of Colin Campbell's seminal book *The China Study* in 2006. This book takes Campbell as a starting point and argues along similar lines that the diseases of civilisation like cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and Alzheimer's can be greatly reduced by eliminating animal products from our diet. It is striking and symptomatic that expenditure on health increased from \$250 billion in 1980 \$2 trillion by 2006. These increases are likely to continue so long as we maintain our current junk-food lifestyles alongside the high-tech drug based approach to health. The latest figures are that 1.7 billion people are overweight as against 840 million undernourished – in other words twice the figure. One of the features of Campbell's book was an expose of revolving doors between government and the pharmaceutical industry and the stacking of committees by representatives of drug companies. Indeed, as readers will be aware, the entire medical system is run for the benefit of these companies who sponsor most of the research and have shaped medical education since the Flexner report of 1913. Among the scholars mentioned in this book are Dean Ornish, Max Gerson and the cardiologist Caldwell Esselstyn. There is a striking quotation by Albert Schweitzer about Max Gerson, who treated his daughter. Conspicuous by their absence Sir Robert McCarrison and Weston Price, who questions the emphasis on low-fat and meat free diets, having researched many healthy societies. However, in most respects this book is spot-on in calling for a radical overhaul of our diets and health systems.

Best Biodynamic Winesby **Monty Walding***Floris Books 2013, 272 pp., £16.99, p/b.*

Floris has already been publishing a guide to when wine tastes best, as well as the biodynamic planting calendars. Here they have produced what must be the definitive guide to the best biodynamic wines, a well illustrated book full of information. The structure is relatively straightforward, with white, rosé and red wines listed by grape variety along with details of the growers. There is an informative introduction about the philosophy behind biodynamic wine as part of a wider organic movement. It is striking that the number of entries from France

is equivalent to all the rest of the countries put together, so that French entries are regional. Burgundy is particularly well represented including Leflaive and Lafon. I had the good fortune to meet Alfred Tesseron of Pontet-Canet at a dinner in Edinburgh and his wine must be the first to achieve the coveted 100 points from Robert Parker in both 2009 and 2010. He observes that using horses compacts the soil for less than tractors, which tend to knock the vines over. In addition, many plots that used to go into the second wine are now good enough to be used in the top label. The emphasis is on nurturing the soil rather than on chemicals.

EDUCATION**Every Child Needs a Mentor**by **Herman Stewart***Lightning Source UK Ltd 2012, 208 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

Herman Stewart has a background in music recording and had once hoped to be a professional footballer. However, he found his path and is now one of the leading mentors in England. He believes that we all have seeds of greatness within us and that mentoring helps them germinate: the mentor's hindsight can be the mentee's foresight. A particularly important theme is boundaries: the mentor is positioned between staff and students, which can create some awkward situations, so it is particularly important to be clear at the outset. There are case histories from some of his mentees, and he also describes the process of raising the bar for the school football team. It is also a significant part of his argument that access to mentoring should be widened and that those who are being mentored should not be stigmatised and automatically thought to be badly behaved. There are exercises and summaries throughout the book, and Herman explains his philosophy in terms of empowerment, motivation and enablement to help the mentee achieve their potential. This puts real substance into the proposition that Every Child Matters, and is surely a positive investment in the future. Every young person should have the opportunity of connecting with their passions and possibilities, and to realise the importance of education as a step along the way. An inspirational and empowering read.

GENERAL**Racing Toward Armageddon**by **Michael Baigent (SMN)***HarperOne, 2011, 276 pp., \$14.99, p/b.*

Written in the run-up to apocalyptic expectations in 2012, this study examines the fear driven and controlling mind-set of fundamentalists in the three Abrahamic religions and their focus on a potentially explosive event in Jerusalem. The alarming thing is that some top officials driving international foreign policy share this apocalyptic perspective, intent on furthering their own self-destructive prophecies and helping bring about Armageddon. Michael explores the theological origins of these ideas and the corresponding inhumanity of fundamentalism. Some of these visions have been misinterpreted to apply to our own time, when the authors clearly intended them to apply to their own. Michael dissects the meaning of the rapture, showing the incoherence of modern interpretations, but those who believe in such things are unlikely to read this book and will cling to literalistic understandings of Scripture that had been discredited for more than 150 years. 77% of fundamentalist Christians in the United States believe that the revelation of St John is a literal truth that will come to pass. The fundamentalist agenda is for theocratic autocracy, whether Christian or Muslim.

This analysis leads Michael to conclude that we need a new and more experiential understanding of God and spirituality based on the inner mystical traditions beyond the exclusiveness of outer cults. Only this more mystical understanding can lead to peace, a view that many readers will share.

Essays and Images

by **Garry Kennard**

GV Art 2012, 102 pp., p/b. See www.garrykennard.com

Garry Kennard is an artist well informed by recent advances in neuroscience, which he uses to understand more about the creative process. This book contains a number of essays as well as plates of some striking paintings and descriptions of some of his experiences as a mountaineer. He also organised a Festival of Art and Mind for a number of years in Winchester. His basic position is that science shines a light on the material world and is the only reliable source of information about it; artists can then look on and ponder this understanding and its implications. He disagrees with the idea that explorations of the brain are limited in what they can tell us about human condition and considers religions as complex systems that are projected erroneously onto the world. Readers will find his reflections somewhat bleak in places – much is consigned to wishful thinking – but his appreciation of the light that neuroscience can shed on art and life raises profound questions about our place in the universe. The combination of words and images makes this all the more arresting.

Temenos Academy Review 2012

Temenos Academy Review 2012, 262 pp., p/b.

The annual Temenos review consists of articles, book reviews and poems from many leading figures, including some of the

founders like Kathleen Raine and the artist Thetis Blacker. Kathleen writes fascinatingly about how she composes a poem. She likens it to a flash of light in the mind, as one sees a fish dart in the stream. Then it must be recaptured by concentration and remembering, with subsequent intuitive elaboration. Wendell Berry recalls an important incident in his family history, while Simon Wilson explores the spiritual and mystical symbolism of black and white. Jeremy Naydler draws on his experience to defend the flower garden as a contribution to beauty, the spirit of place and a re-creation of paradise. There are 45 pages of detailed book reviews, including one of Keith Critchlow's *Hidden Geometry of Flowers* as well as Jeremy's *Gardening as a Sacred Art*. There is much to feed both mind and soul.

Mysteries of the Ancient Past

by **Graham Hancock**

Bear & Company Publishing 2012, 310 pp., \$15.99, p/b.

A Graham Hancock reader consisting of a series of essays building on his work. The premise is that there is more to history than the official version, and that our ancestors knew a great deal more than we give them credit for. The essays cover a variety of topics on alternative science, history and archaeology and share a concern to uncover a deeper level of truth and make a contribution to the evolution of consciousness. Topics include Vedic literature, correspondences between ancient thought and modern science, the meaning of megaliths, the significance of the sun, Atlantis, similarities between Jesus and Mithras, and mysterious astronomical phenomena. All the essays are informative, and some are more readable than others. The reader who will get most out of them is one who is already familiar with these fields.



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