book reviews

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science-philosophy of science

Does the Brain Have a Mind of its Own? Ask a Neuroplastician

Carol Lee Flinders

THE BRAIN THAT CHANGES ITSELF:
Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science
Norman Doidge, M.D.
Penguin Books Ltd., 2007, 427 pp., £9.99, p/b – ISBN 978-0141038872

TRAIN YOUR MIND, CHANGE YOUR BRAIN:
How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves
Sharon Begley
Ballantine Books, 2007, 283 pp., £8.99, p/b – ISBN 978-1845296742

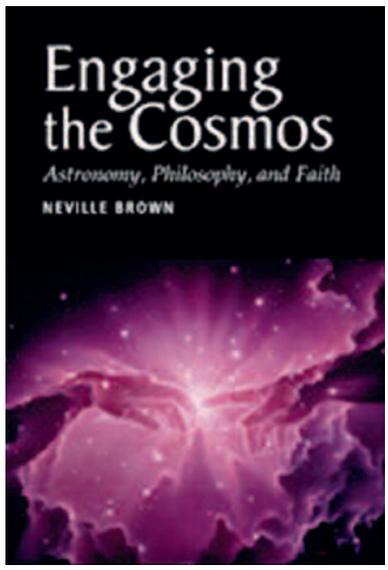
The Brain That Changes Itself by Norman Doidge, M.D., is a splendid introduction to the field of neuroplasticity. In the equally readable *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain*, scientific writer Sharon Begley covers much of the same ground; yet her emphasis is significantly different in certain regards, as are the implications she draws. While the two books overlap, I rarely found myself skimming. The picture of the human brain that emerges here is too radically new, and too astounding, to absorb in just one pass anyway, and as we recognise the differences between the two books, we also grasp how young the field itself is – how *plastic,* in fact, and open to interpretation.

Norman Doidge is a psychiatrist, a psychoanalyst, and a researcher, but just as important for this particular undertaking, he knows how to tell a story:

'The woman joking with me across the table was born with only half her brain . . .'

Doidge ushers us into this extraordinary field by degrees, one revelatory finding at a time. Early on, he disabuses us of the one thing most of us think we know about the brain – that the auditory centre is here, the visual centre there, etc. Dr. Paul Bach y Rita, a pioneer neuroplastician, has demonstrated that the brain is not machine-like after all, and that specific mental functions are not hardwired into a particular location. The mechanistic model made sense in a time when our only insights into the brain's workings derived from accidents that damaged a specific location and resulted in predictable disabilities. Now, though, it is clear that regions of the brain that have been dedicated to one sense can be — have been — re-trained to serve another. The auditory cortex can reorganise itself to have the structure of the visual cortex. Our sense receptors translate different kinds of energy from the external world into electrical patterns sent down our nerves. These patterns are the universal language 'spoken' inside the brain. 'We see with our brains,' Bach y Rita explains, 'not our eyes.'

'Nature has given us a brain,' Doidge observes, 'that survives in a changing world by changing itself.' He employs the term 'cortical real estate,' and asks us to understand that 'use it or lose it' is the law of the land in question. We can 'lose it' in the sense that a massive 'pruning back' operation begins in the brain in adolescence, during which synaptic connections and neurons that haven't been used much simply switch off. But we can also lose it in a much more interesting sense that has to do with the *topography* of the brain. If we stop exercising mental skills, 'the brain map space for those skills is turned over to the skills we practise instead.'



Plasticity is competitive: brain maps allocate brain-processing power, which is a precious resource As Doidge puts it, felicitously, 'There is an endless war of nerves going on inside each of our brains.' An ongoing war requires continuous recruitment: another fundamental principle of neuroscience is, 'Nerves that fire together wire together.' Each time we repeat a behaviour, its control of the brain map strengthens. This is why bad habits are so hard to unlearn, but it's also the reason why deliberately repeated mental exercises can relieve afflictions like the 'brain lock' involved in obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The applications of neuroplasticity, and the *implications*, appear to be almost boundless. Northern California's Michael Merzenich, regarded as the world's leading researcher on brain plasticity, claims that brain exercises may be as useful as drugs to treat diseases as severe as schizophrenia. His research demonstrates that the brain's plasticity doesn't vanish with youth – that radical improvements in cognitive functioning are possible even in the elderly.

Other pioneers in the field include psychologist Ernest Taub, whose 'constraint-induced movement therapy' has revolutionised the way stroke victims are rehabilitated; neurologist V.S.Ramachandran, whose 'mirror box' has cracked the mystery of phantom limbs and the chronic, excruciating pain they can cause; and Dr. Alvaro Pascual-Leone, who first mapped the brain using transcranial magnetic stimulation, and determined that 'from a neuro-scientific point of view, imagining an act and doing it are not as different as they sound,' an insight which would lead to the development of the first machines that actually 'read' people's thoughts.

A key discovery in the work of Michael Merzenich is that lasting changes in brain maps only occur when the subject is paying close attention. For Sharon Begley, author of *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain,* that insight is of tremendous importance because it underscores the very natural connections she and many of *her* subjects believe exist between Buddhism and neuroscience. 'Neuroplasticity occurs only when the mind is in a particular mental state,' she writes, 'one marked by attention and focus. The mind matters. The question was, what power does it have over the brain.'

Now this is language — and implies a conceptual framework — that are both utterly foreign to Doidge. I don't believe the word 'mind' comes up anywhere in his book (whose title, we'll recall, speaks only of a brain that changes itself!). I know it doesn't when he is describing the groundbreaking new approach neuropsychiatrist Jeffrey Schwartz has developed for treating OCD, though Schwartz himself concludes from that work, according to Begley, that 'the mind can change the brain.' Schwartz describes the therapy in question as an application of 'mindfulness practice;' Doidge does not, and while he does use the word 'mysticism' once, it is as a pejorative. The word 'meditation,' which for many of us might seem relevant to discussions of a brain that changes itself 'from the inside,' is also a no-show.

Not to belabour the point, but these two gifted writers do diverge in rather fundamental ways. As a psychotherapist, Doidge is particularly gratified by the extent to which he believes neuroplasticity validates psychoanalysis. He reports delightedly that Freud anticipated the finding that 'cells that fire together wire together.' Begley does not identify herself as a Buddhist, but her book arises out of the 2004 Mind and Life Institute conference at Dharamsala, where a handful of prominent neuroplasticians met with the Dalai Lama for one week, taking turns to explain their research to him. The moderator was Richard Davidson, who has studied the brains of Buddhist contemplatives in his lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The tremendous contribution of Begley's book is to raise forcibly the possibility that the real pioneers in neuroplasticity may be men and women who have been investigating the brain *from the inside* in meditation, following instructions recorded in ancient texts and passed down for thousands of years in an unbroken lineage of spiritual practitioners. Throughout her extremely lucid explanation of the fundamentals of the field (and she covers the same 'basics' that Doidge does), Begley pauses regularly to offer intriguingly parallel insights drawn from Buddhist tradition and interpreted by contemporary Buddhists including the Dalai Lama.

If you were to read just one book on neuroplasticity . . .? It would be a real pity.

Carol Lee Flinders, *Ph.D, Northern California, is author of 'Enduring Grace: Living Portraits of Seven Women Mystics,' and 'Enduring Lives: Portraits of Women and Faith in Action.'*

Building a Science-Faith Accord in the 21st Century

Eric Priest

ENGAGING THE COSMOS

Neville Brown

Gazelle, 2006, 367 pp., £16.95, p/b – ISBN 9 781 903900 673

This is a fascinating and amazingly wide-ranging book that gives a broad coverage of science and spirituality, emphasising the complementary nature of astronomy, philosophy and faith and the importance in the modern world of developing a reasonable and holistic attitude to key global issues.

Neville Brown stresses the need for a more positive interaction between religion and science (especially astronomy, which he regards as the queen of the sciences), in particular the relation between life, consciousness and matter. Throughout the book he aims to reach across disciplinary divides, countering the increasing specialisation of science today.

He emphasises the need to scrutinise religious beliefs and check that they do not conflict with modern scientific understanding. As Bruno Guiderdoni (an eminent astrophysicist and a devout Sufi Muslim) said recently in a James Gregory public lecture in St Andrews, if one's scientific understanding apparently conflicts with one's religion then it is likely that one needs to reinterpret one's understanding of the religious texts.

The book consists of five sections. The first, entitled 'The heavens in history' give a brief history of astronomy from the stone age, through Ptolemy and Copernicus to the modern day. He discusses the psychology drives that gave rise to astronomical curiosity and religious belief and how in many civilisations common unresolved issues have arisen, such as the nature of creation, idealism versus materialism, the possibility of life elsewhere, and reductionistic logic versus holistic insight. He mentions here the saying of JBS Haldane that the universe is not only stranger than we realise, but it is stranger than we can realise.

The second section, called 'The life dimension', emphasises how uncertain we remain about the prevalence of life elsewhere in the universe. He suggests rather controversially that in some sense all matter may have consciousness. Furthermore, whereas many feel that the Universe exists to sustain life, he is of the opposite opinion that life exists to serve the Universe by virtue of its possession of consciousness.

In the third section ('Utopia lost?'), he points out that, after evolving for a million or so years, we are now 'dangerously close to making a hellish mess of everything'. He describes the negative effects on the spirit of many features of modern life, such as our erosion of and unconcern for nature, our focus on short-term gratification, the serious threat of biological warfare, the absence in cities and towns of the inspiration of a crystal clear night sky, and the danger of weapons from space. He also sees a modern retreat from reason, in the way in which happiness is defined, in the replacement of family by isolation and impersonality, in the unfulfilling nature of much work, and in an unhealthy focus on astrology.

The fourth section ('A dissolving heritage?') discusses world religions and he is particularly insightful in its comparison of eastern ideas. The great religions possess an enormous amount of collective wisdom, and so their collapse would likely be filled by 'all sorts of unpleasant rubbish'. Hence the need to encourage interfaith dialogue and renewal. The questions he would ask of them all include: where is humanity placed in the cosmic order? How personal is God? How do creation legends and astronomy relate to religious belief? How much toleration is extended to other faiths? How are they responding to contemporary challenges? In this century he hopes to see a coming

together of the main religions and also of those who are outside them but have a broad ethical concern and spiritual aspiration.

For Judaism he hopes for partnership in the Holy Land (rather than a nonviable two-state solution) which could be a stimulus for collaboration world-wide. He also sees climate change aggravating desertification there. For Christianity he suggests that its future hinges on a rediscovery of spirituality in everyday life, with Russian mysticism perhaps playing a role. Within a holistic approach to spiritual revolution, a key aim should be insisting on non-violence, with force being only a last resort. For Islam he mentions the influence of Sufism in encouraging interaction with other creeds. He also touches on Indian pluralism and Japanese togetherness.

The final section, called 'To here from eternity', looks to the future, when nations will be brought into closer contact by ease of communication. They could respond by becoming more closed to each other, focussing on consumerism and irrational cults, and stimulating an authoritarian backlash. Alternatively, he hopes that they become more open, with the great religions engaging much more with each other and also with science, and leading to a general revival of spiritual values. This would go along with a better airing of issues such as: the place and role of humanity in the Universe; the part played by Life and the nature and place of consciousness. He teases out aspects of humanity's yearning for belief, and discusses a creative convergence between different aspects of God. Finally, he looks forward to a time of general appreciation of the privilege of being alive in such a health-giving planet from humans who care for the Earth and yearn for meaning and fulfilment that is aided by dialogue and peace rather than dogma and violence.

Neville Brown touches on so many diverse topics that for an in-depth analysis of many of them it is of course necessary to seek elsewhere. Minor criticisms are as follows. He regards astronomy and cosmology as interchangeable, but this is misleading since astronomy in practice includes many other key distinct subjects such as stellar astronomy and solar physics: indeed, the Sun has often played an inspirational role in religions. Furthermore, he discusses the origin of calculus but omits to mention (like many others before him) that James Gregory (first professor of mathematics at St Andrews) played as important a role as the better-known figures of Newton and Leibniz and indeed published the first textbook on the subject (as well as inventing the Gregorian telescope). Again, where he touches on climate in chapter 1, there is much more to say – in particular, that whereas the Sun used to be a major influence on climate change, it is now clear that the most important cause of the increased global warming of the past 30 years is human rather than solar.

In conclusion, this is a splendid book, which is highly recommended to those who are seeking an up-to-date understanding of contemporary science and its implications for spirituality.

Prof. Eric Priest *FRS holds the James Gregory Chair of Mathematics in the University of St. Andrews and is co-organising the James Gregory Lectures – see www.jamesgregory.org*

Teilhard: Anthropologist Extraordinaire

Martin Lockley

THE JESUIT AND THE SKULL: TEILHARD DE CHARDIN, EVOLUTION AND THE SEARCH FOR PEKING MAN

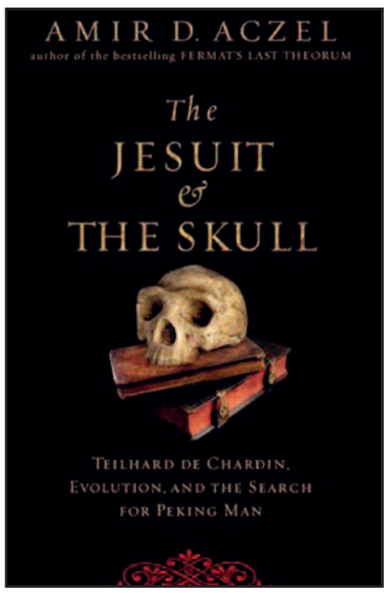
Amir D Aczel

Riverhead Books, (Penguin) New York, US$ 24.95, p/b - ISBN-978-1-594485-956-3

There are many interesting biographies of Teilhard, and anyone who has read a few, with their typical samplings of his own poetic observations, will know something of the extraordinary life which made him an iconic figure in 20th century science and philosophy. Aficionados will also known that he was an extraordinarily warm, diplomatic and loving man who made a deep impression on all who knew him, even those from very foreign cultures.

Born to an aristocratic family in 1881 near Clermont-en-Auvergne, his mother was a descendent of Voltaire. As a young man he trained as a Jesuit and endured his first exile in Jersey and England where he began collecting hominid fossils, which later caused him to be wrongly accused of participation in the Piltdown affair. During World War I he served heroically as a decorated stretcher-bearer and, despite the horrors he witnessed, began to speak with mystic language about humanity's inexorable progress towards a more evolved state. After the war he studied paleontology for his doctorate, while becoming well-known in Parisian intellectual and anthropological circles for his visionary ideas on evolution. His notion that the transition in human consciousness (from biosphere to noosphere) was as radical a phase shift as the origin of life itself from inorganic matter, offered an appealing holistic vision, reminiscent of more-recent, Laszlo-like theories of everything. He saw humans as a new phylum- not just a new species, helping elevate the psychic temperature of the cosmos in its evolution towards a higher state (Omega Man) along linear evolutionary lines (orthogenesis).

Although very popular with French intellectuals, these ideas did not sit well with his Jesuit superiors and the Vatican, who resolutely forbade the publication of his work. Thus, from the early 1920s onwards he spent more than two decades in exile in China returning to France only briefly when his superiors deigned to allow him. In China however, he helped make ground-breaking discoveries in Inner Mongolia and near Peking (Peking Man). He wrote many scientific papers and attended international conferences but never obtained permission to publish his philosophical and theological speculations, even though they were



hugely successful when published posthumously. In his mid sixties after escaping from Japanese occupied China during World War II, the original Peking Man fossils went missing, creating one of the biggest anthropological mysteries of the century. (The Piltdown fraud, was equally scandalous when exposed in 1954, and remained mysterious until resolved in the late 1990s. Teilhard was never implicated despite silly claims by Louis Leakey and Stephen J Gould). More concerned by the Church's hostility to his visionary philosophical writing, which he implored permission to publish, he suffered a major heart attack in 1947. In the last years of his life the church forced his exile in the USA and he died when his second major heart attack struck him in Manhattan on Easter Sunday in 1955.

So, what does Amir Aczel, author of nine other books about scientists (including *Fermat's Last Theorem*) add to the many biographies of this iconoclastic anthropologist extra-ordinaire? After reading the first five rather pedestrian chapters dealing with well-known facts about evolution and early hominid discoveries (Neanderthals and Java Man) I thought I would be disappointed. But the book picks up nicely after this. The subject is so fascinating and Teilhard's letters and other writings so extensive that one can't go too far wrong. Aczel also has an easy knack for weaving in Teilhard's essential philosophical ideas, which in many other books dealing with 'Teilhard's thought' quickly become convoluted and obscure.

Most of the book's later chapters (6-17) have the flavour of a brisk adventure story. His 1923 expedition to the Ordos Desert of Inner Mongolia made Teilhard one of the first western paleontologists to venture into the Asian interior in the same decade that, in outer Mongolia, the dinosaur-hunting, bandit-defying Roy Chapman Andrews, of the American Museum, was cutting a very different iconic figure that, generations later, gave rise to the Indiana Jones persona. Teilhard reacted differently. He found the desert gave him a sense of 'the real free life' and he was stimulated to write his moving 'Mass on the world' - with 'neither bread or wine, nor altar.. I your priest, will make the whole world my altar.' Teilhard penetrated further into the interior during the 1931 Citroen expedition across Asia. On this occasion he traveled to far western China (Xingjang) and on into Turkestan where the expedition found warnings scrawled on stones to turn back and avoid heavy fighting. But they continued on and, when fired on, they returned fire 'so strongly that a white flag immediately appeared' and the 'enemy' confessed that had made an error! On this trip Teilhard met Nirgidma, a Mongolian noble known as Princess Palta, who now lived in a regal yurt but previously had lived in Parisian high society experiencing 'adventures flying with Antoine Saint-Exupery and learning to sing from Isadora Duncan.'

For several years Teilhard had what can only be described as a romance with Lucile Swan, a vivacious, freewheeling American sculptress who worked with the Peking anthropologists to reconstruct a fleshed out head of Peking Man. Although Teilhard never violated his vows of chastity the mutual affection between Lucile and Pierre was so strong that for a while she rejected the advances of all other suitors, and Pierre could write that Lucile's 'precious letter' had been 'received in his heart,' bespeaking 'great prospects for us… If I can give you something, you in turn can help me and complete me…in the warm light of yourself, and …by your keen … sense of reality.' He described her as his 'compass point,' his 'light.' 'what is born between us is forever…' Although the two enjoyed many romantic picnics and profound conversation Lucile hoped for physical intimacy. It was never to be. For a while the warm feelings endured when she was away and wrote 'Precious Pierre. You are with me so strongly all the time… and you make life always more beautiful.' But eventually Lucile recognised that Pierre was not a 'regular man…with the same needs as other men.' So these two peripatetic travelers drifted apart as distance and different definitions of love cooled their ardour.

To the end Teilhard's faith was 'in the invincible power of love.' 'Just to speak to him made you feel better.' He was a man 'good beyond the common measure' who according to Lucile loved on a 'different plane' free of 'jealously [and] other less admirable emotions.' His heart was perhaps uniquely sensitive, and above all he was the embodiment of a mystical and spiritual quality which all biographers, including Aczel can not fail to recognise and admire. Alas, the church failed appreciate Teilhard's truly visionary but authentically Christian and deeply humane message in time to spare this extraordinary anthropologist the pain of rejection and exile.

Professor Martin Lockley *teaches anthropology and consciousness studies at the University of Denver, Colorado and is author of 'The Eternal Trail'.*

No Philosophers Admitted?

Max Payne

THE ORIGINS OF MODERN SCIENCE 'A HISTORY OF NATURAL PHILOSOPHY'

Edward Grant

Cambridge U.P, 361 pp. £14.99, p/b - ISBN 978-0-521-68957-1,

This is an important book on the origins of modern science. Edward Grant argues that the key element in its rise was the status and power of Natural Philosophy during the European Middle Ages. Natural philosophy seeks to explain the material world by the exercise of reason without recourse to scriptural revelation. This is slightly in contrast to the thesis advocated by Herbert Butterfield in his *Origins of Modern Science,* where he argued that the mediaeval belief in a transcendent law giving God encouraged men to seek for the laws whereby the world was created. There is no entry for Butterfield in the index.

Man has always sought, and needed, to understand the world around him. The earliest civilisations understood things in terms of a mixture of religion, magic, craft skills and common custom. Even so Babylonia saw the dawn of astronomy, and medicine goes back to ancient Egypt. However the beginnings of science and philosophy are to be found in the speculations of the Ionian Greeks in the 6th century BC. They sought to explain events by natural causes that could be discerned by reason, without any reference to Gods, demons, or occult forces. In the beginning science, mathematics and philosophy were inextricably mixed. The Pythagoreans thought that reality was number, and Plato held that mathematics was the gateway to philosophical enlightenment.

It was Aristotle who gave natural philosophy its definitive form. It is sometimes forgotten that he was the first significant scientific observational biologist. Even so, in his

system observation and mathematics only gave the 'how' of things, it was speculative reason which gave the 'why'. Aristotle's philosophy provided a systematic rational world view of mechanics and astronomy. It provided a shell within which embryonic science could develop, though in the end the shell had to be broken.

With the fall of the Roman Empire, and the conquest of the Middle East by the Arabs, the tradition of natural philosophy was absorbed and advanced by Islamic scholars, and it was then taken back to Europe at the beginning of the 'high' Middle Ages. Grant deals with the crucial cultural question of why natural philosophy died out in Islam just at the time when it took off in Western Europe. He argues convincingly that in Islam rational philosophy was always seen as a foreign discipline taken from the infidel Greeks, and that any attempt to provide a rational explanation for events violated surrender to the inscrutable actions of God as demanded by the Koran. In the end religious obscurantism won in Islam.

In contrast philosophical argument was intrinsic to Christianity. It had taken 500 years of theological debate to work out the final doctrine of the Incarnation. After difficulties with the obscurantists of his time, Thomas Aquinas made it from heretic to saint, and achieved a synthesis between Aristotle and the Catholic faith. A key point of the synthesis was his clear distinction between natural philosophy and the teachings of faith and revelation. This enabled Mediaeval philosophers to speculate as they wished about natural causes and to indulge in some sophisticated thought experiments. Even so for them the key to understanding was rational argument, not observation. Theirs was Aristotle's world view altered only by logic and not by experiment.

Science and the modern world began when Francis Bacon and Galileo Galilei reversed the relation between observation and speculation. Bacon declared that knowledge should be based on empirical experiment and induction, though he never achieved a single practical scientific insight himself. It was Galileo who was the axis of history, and Grant slightly underestimates him. Not only did his astronomical observations prove the heliocentric theory of Copernicus. The story of his dropping weights from the leaning tower of Pisa was not apocryphal**;** it disproved Aristotle's mechanics, and could be repeated by anyone. Surprisingly this is not mentioned. Above all Galileo insisted that the language of nature was written in mathematics, and that science should concentrate on the primary qualities of mass, distance, and time, and ignore all the secondary qualities.

In this way Galileo forecast the rigorously experimental and materialistic approach of modern science. Speculative natural philosophy did not die at once. Isaac Newton thought his system of celestial mechanics pointed to a Divine clock maker who was needed to keep it running, and this was all one with his alchemy and work on Biblical chronology. Professors of physics were professors of natural philosophy down to the 19th century. And here Grant's story ends.

Is natural philosophy now dead? Niels Bohr famously had a notice outside his door saying 'No philosophers admitted' while inside he was working on the extremely philosophical Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics. Certainly deducing scientific facts from speculative general philosophical theory is not fashionable, though creationists may be doing exactly that. But working up from the nature of science to wider issues of human values, meaning and purpose is widespread and significant**:** indeed it is inevitable and necessary. Michael Polanyi, Paul Davies, and Roger Penrose start from modern science and go to ultimate human issues. John Polkinghorne and Richard Dawkins take opposite views on the relation between science and God, but both are doing meta-scientific philosophy in discussing it. It is not called natural philosophy these days, but that is what they are doing.

Max Payne *is a Vice-President of the Network.*

Suffer and Survive

Roger Newman Turner

THE EXTREME LIFE OF DR J S HALDANE

Martin Goodman

Simon and Schuster, 2007, 432 pp., £14.99, h/b – ISBN-13: 978-0-7432-8597-1

He was the man who put the canaries in the mines, made it possible for men to descend to the depths of the oceans and ascend the world's highest peaks, and he can even be credited with the early experiments in respiratory physiology that made space travel possible. Dr J S Haldane conducted many experiments, often on himself or his son, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to ascertain the effect on the body of extreme conditions in coalmines, on mountain tops, the trenches of the first world war, and under the sea. When he wasn't working in the field, he simulated the atmospheric conditions in his Oxford laboratory or his own home.

Martin Goodman has applied the same meticulous care to his research into the life and work of this remarkable man as did his subject to his experiments. He describes, in fascinating detail, the effects of gases in the mines or the rarefied atmosphere of high altitudes, drawing on the accounts and published papers of Haldane and his fellow scientists but also gains insight into the life of the man himself through the writings of his family and friends.

In 1894 one of the worst mining disasters of the 19th century killed 57 men at the Tylorstown colliery in the Rhondda Valley. Haldane was called in to examine the bodies and to try and ascertain the cause of the explosion. After taking blood samples and coal dust from the bodies of pit ponies and the faces of the dead men he concluded that carbon monoxide and not simply the force of the explosion or burning was responsible for many of the deaths. Recognising that canaries were sensitive to low levels of noxious gases insufficient to extinguish a miner's lamp, Haldane devised a cage containing a canary for miners to carry in the pits. When the bird keeled over the miners were alerted to the danger whilst a sprung trap sealed the cage into which oxygen was released to revive it. This became known as the Haldane Box. The yellow canary is an analogy now often used in functional medicine for the environmentally sensitive patient.

Back in Edinburgh, where he studied and his family had a home, Haldane experimented on oxygen deprivation by sitting for hours in an airtight lead-lined box with an observation window. By analysing the air extracted from the chamber in which he or a colleague sat, it was possible to determine the lowest levels of oxygen at which men could survive. Haldane was to conduct many such endurance experiments. In his own home he used sealed rooms in which he

climbed up and down ladders with a miner's lamp to determine the most lethal levels of carbon monoxide.

He spent several months on Pike's Peak in Colorado studying the effects of high altitude; he was appointed by the Admiralty to develop ventilation systems for new submarines; he was employed by the War Office to devise gas masks to protect troops fighting in the trenches of northern Europe in the first world war. He even used his own son, Jack, as an experimental subject, sending him under water in a diving suit in his efforts to devise tables of ascent that are used to this day by divers to prevent 'the bends'.

Goodman does not portray Haldane as simply a ruthless, hardnosed scientist however. He held deep philosophical convictions which sometimes drew criticism from his peers. 'Science is the application of abstract logical principles to a reality which they can never express fully' he wrote. And of what he described as the 'misty sphere' at the periphery of our limits of knowledge he said 'the advance of investigation has only served to make the misty sphere more evident'.

Haldane's enquiring mind and philosophical inclinations were probably influenced by his education. Born into a well-connected, somewhat Calvinistic Scottish family – his elder brother Lord Richard Haldane became Secretary for War and later Lord Chancellor – he did an MA at Edinburgh University, then studied in Germany at the University of Jena where he was exposed to the philosophy of Goethe and Hegel and attended lectures by Ernst Haeckel. Haeckel was a champion of 'monism' and put forward the post-Darwinian view that environment had a profound influence on each organism and its evolution – views that undoubtedly influenced Haldane throughout his life.

Haldane was married to Kathleen an 'Edinburgh Tory' whose rather right-wing views surface at several points in the book but may have served to restrain her husband from exploring the wilder shores to which his enquiring spirit might have been tempted. Undoubtedly she was a stabilising force who gave Haldane and their two children a secure foundation for their productive lives. Their son, Professor J B S Haldane, became an eminent geneticist and their daughter, the well-known novelist Naomi Mitchison.

In this absorbing biography Martin Goodman has brought to life one of medicine's great eccentrics demonstrating that the combination of humanity, spiritual awareness, and scientific rigour can still bring real benefits to mankind.

Dr. Roger Newman Turner *is a naturopath and author of a number of books including 'Naturopathic Medicine: Treating the Whole Person'.*

The Meaning of Gaia

David Lorimer

EARTHLY REALISM

Edited by Mary Midgley (SMN)

Imprint Academic, 2007, 108 pp., £8.95, p/b – ISBN 9 781845 400804

Readers will have become familiar with the Gaia hypothesis over the last few years, largely because of the writings of James Lovelock himself. His most recent book *Homage to Gaia* along with his advocacy of nuclear power as the best way of tackling global warming has given him a high profile. He also provides the foreword to this series of essays in which one contributor quotes him as saying that Gaia is a protean idea which can take many forms. The object of this volume is to provide a multifaceted view of the hypothesis and its implications from the perspectives of science, philosophy, law, climatology, theology and psychology.

Mary Midgley begins by reminding the reader that the notion of Gaia has created a great deal of tension not only within science but also due to its wider implications. It has challenged the mechanistic metaphor by personifying the Earth, insisting that it is in a sense alive. Brian Goodwin and Stephan Harding from Schumacher College put the idea in a wider scientific and philosophical context, reminding us that it emerged at the same time as chaos theory in the 1960s and how much science has changed since that time. Stephan takes a bold animistic perspective and invites the reader to undertake an exercise designed to give a real sense of belonging to the earth.

Cormac Cullinan outlines Earth jurisprudence as a necessary revision of our governance systems, so that humans contribute to, rather than undermine, the health of the Earth. It would have been useful at this point to have had a corresponding contribution from accountancy. Richard Betts provides an update on global warming, while various contributors discuss issues relating to denial and resistance. A key question, addressed by John Mead and David Midgley, is how people are to be mobilised for change. A change towards a world-view based on relationships and connection is part of this process, but it will need to be enacted in policy terms. In other words, we need both a change of attitude and governance structure, a correspondence between inner and outer. This is a very useful collection for readers wanting to get to grips with the implications of the Gaia hypothesis.

medicine-health

Corporate Responsibility

Roger Taylor

WOLVES OF WATER

Chris Busby (SMN)

Green Audit Books, 2006, Aberystwyth SY23 1DZ, 518pp., $12 - ISBN 1-897761-26-0.

This book is about corporate responsibility as it is applied to national governments. Part biography, part textbook, part warning, part entertainment and part celebration of life, it is an account of one man's decision to take on the might of the nuclear/military lobby using methods of science and epidemiology. Most of all it is a message to the planet and its inhabitants to take control of the science/policy interface before the products of scientific ways of thinking destroy us all. The book charts developments in Dr Busby's researches on the subject of radioactive pollution from the nuclear industry since his *Wings of Death* (1995) introduced the thesis that the releases of novel radioactive substances like Caesium-137, Plutonium-239 and Strontium-90 were the cause of the present cancer epidemic. Presenting his research on the health effects of Sellafield and cancer near the Irish Sea as a hook, Busby dissects the workings of the government advisory establishment, the biased science and institutional cover-ups of the causes of cancer and other illnesses.

From cancer near nuclear sites and contaminated coasts, he moves on to radioactive dust in middle England, plutonium in your children's teeth, buried nuclear reactors under housing estates and the effects of Uranium weapons on people living thousands of miles from battlefields. Packed with

anecdotes, asides, poems, photographs, songs, quotations, graphs and tables of data, this colourful, informative and empowering work is recommended reading for epidemiologists, environmental activists, scientists, philosophers, politicians, regulators, lawyers and perhaps criminologists.

This, from the blurb on the back of the book, puts the broad sweep of this book very concisely. Lest anyone think the author is merely an enthusiastic 'Greenie', ignorant of the real issues, his CV at the end of the book details his qualifications, membership of many learned societies, employment, research experience and publications. He has been on many official committees, being appointed among others as UK Representative of European Committee on Radiation Risk, UK Government Committee Evaluating Radiation Risk from Internal Emitters and UK Ministry of Defence Oversight Committee on Depleted Uranium. Also listed are 64 invitations to speak, all within an eleven-year period.

With 518 pages, its very size is likely to put some readers off. Nevertheless, if he was to present a convincing case, it seems to me he had no other option: any remaining loopholes could be seized upon by the government/corporate machine to dismiss his case. Even if rather few scientists and other influential people read it immediately, this book will continue to stand as an enduring resource for the future. One has to admire Dr Busby for what is clearly an immense labour – of love really, since much of it attracted little or no funding, and he was, at times, reduced to the basics of survival. Anyone wanting to criticise his conclusions would have to examine a mass of meticulously presented and statistically supported evidence.

He makes some strong points from the science of radiobiology, which have been studiously ignored by proponents of the nuclear industry. One is the role of radioactive particles (i.e. dust) in causation of cancer – so-called 'internal radiation'. If an alpha emission from just one such particle damages both strands of DNA such that both copies of a gene are destroyed, then the cell has no way to repair the damage. And if this takes place in a critical gene, it can initiate the complex sequence of events leading to full-blown cancer. Conventional assessment of radiation risk is based principally on data obtained from relatively short-term exposures to beta and gamma emitters ('external radiation') much of it from laboratory animals, and from Hiroshima. Whereas the beta and gamma rays can be picked up by Geiger counters, the very low energy alpha rays (which are all that's necessary for induction of cancer) cannot. To assess the risk from these requires far more laborious analyses of soil, plant and water samples. Busby, and his few heroic helpers (mainly unpaid), took large numbers of such samples, mostly from coastal regions around the Irish Sea, and with analyses by some helpful laboratories, were able to correlate cancer incidence with distance from the sea. The conclusion was that particles containing alpha-emitters were being driven inland by wind-blown spray – mainly from where they had accumulated in the offshore silt. The same was found even on the other side, in Ireland.

Another telling point is the so-called 'bystander effect', whereby a cell with radiation damage becomes genetically unstable – and also induces such instability in neighbouring cells – so that the likelihood of carcinogenic mutations from a single alpha emission is much greater than might have been thought. Furthermore, as he emphasises, some isotopes commonly found in fall-out, such as Strontium, Barium and Uranium are particularly potent mutagens because they bind to DNA.

In order to make the necessary correlations, they had to obtain statistics for cancer incidence in the critical areas. Here we begin to get some inkling of the powerful influences he was up against. The blow-by-blow account of his attempts to get this data makes it very clear that high-level moves were made to stop the release of certain critical figures. It was only by an oversight, apparently, that a disk was sent by the Wales Cancer Registry before this was closed down. This body was replaced by the WCISU, who then claimed they had wiped the data. The rest of the large section on 'Denials', makes a fascinating, and disturbing, study on the sociology of science in relation to power groupings.

We often hear, these days, of the 'Cancer Epidemic'. And yet mainstream medicine constantly tells us only good news: e.g. increases in 5-year survival of this or that type of cancer. What is the truth? Dr Busby amasses a solid base of evidence showing very considerable increases, especially in the last thirty years. Some of it correlates quite specifically with certain events, such as the Chernobyl disaster, and the emissions from Sellafield. Of the many graphs, one could note the 30% increase in cancer (in terms of standard registration ratios) in Wales between 1972 and 1987. It becomes entirely believable, as he surmises, that radioactivity is now the main causative agent – even over and above all the chemicals in our environment.

In spite of its length, Dr Busby's book is highly readable. I read most of it, and particularly enjoyed the poems, and the little asides of black humour. But the overall message is deadly serious. We, and our world, are in peril from many threats – not only nuclear pollution, but (among several others), '…economic pollution, power pollution, objectivity pollution, cynicism pollution…'. The large section on denials makes it clear that we cannot rely on official bodies, or even official science, to put things right. This can only be done through alternative institutions. We must circumvent official institutions, and have our own researchers drawing conclusions based on quantitative evidence, and making them public by any means possible. The book ends, as it begins, with the poem by Louis MacNiece: 'Wolves of Water', whose last verse reads:

Come then all of you , come closer,
form a circle
Join hands and make believe that
joined
Hands will keep away the wolves of
water
Who howl along our coast. And it be
assumed
That no-one hears them among the
talk and laughter.

***Dr Roger Taylor** is a former research immunologist.*

Becoming more Conscious

Serge Beddington-Behrens

NEW DIMENSIONS IN HEALING

Tony Neate (SMN)

Eye of Gaza Press, 2007, 140 pp., £8.99, p/b – ISBN 978-1873545041

I must confess to always having reservations about 'channelled books'. I have often wondered why our disembodied brethren from the misty beyond are so often dull, prone to cliché and the sin of over-

simplification! Imagine my delight, then, in reading this important and well-constructed book, to having these reservations blown away in the first three minutes!

What is needed as we enter this Millennium is a new primer for the many new emerging methodologies of healing, and this book is as good as any. As H A via Tony Neate points out, 'The days of the healer bringing 'God energy' to make a person whole, is a thing of the past.' Today, 'Healing is no longer about curing but about our becoming more conscious at all levels.'

The book is divided into different chapters for the many different categories of healing. It begins with a chapter on Karmic healing, and goes on to what is referred to as Advanced Energy healing, which is about 'the power of thought being applied to those imbalances that are the true cause of all disease.' A fascinating description follows on Conceptual healing, addressing the different kinds of difficulty that 'enter us' in the process of our being born, after which we hear about Ancestral healing or how to heal the wounds passed down to us through the generations. The chapter on Homeopathic healing is very insightful, as is that on Archetypal healing, 'Being the energy we carry from the group soul, i.e., the political, religious and collective beliefs, with which we have been associated.'

What then follows are very innovative ways of addressing 'unfinished business' from Past Lives, and how we may rid ourselves of Spirit Attachments - old-style exorcism is a thing of the past. After this comes an important chapter on the challenges of healing our planet. Other chapters follow which give important new insights into topics such as cancer, death, drugs and terrorism, all of which allow us to see our own personal wounding as it relates to imbalances and dysfunctions out in the world as a whole.

This book is chock full of excellent healing techniques and exercises. Very important are those chapters explaining how we can protect ourselves against negative energy and keep inwardly clear! I see this book not only as a 'must' for people who want to expand their own capabilities for self healing (I have used many of the processes here on myself), but also as essential reading for those in all the many different branches of the healing professions. Speaking as a psychotherapist, I have also used many of the exercises suggested here on my clients, again with excellent results. It is my sincere hope, therefore, that this important book is able to reach that wider audience that it deserves and that many others benefit from it as I have done.

Did Anything Good Ever Come from Psychedelic Drugs?

Gunnel Minett

HIGHER WISDOM, EMINENT ELDERS EXPLORE THE CONTINUING IMPACT OF PSYCHEDELICS

Edited by Roger Walsh and Charles S. Grob,

State University of New York Press
www.sunypress.edu, 2005, 267 p,
£17.24, pb - ISBN 0-7914-8518-7

Psychedelic drugs have been illegal since the 1960s - for good reasons we have been told. The wave of drug use that swept the world in the sixties hippie era caused a lot of problems to a lot of people. The worse examples were people who became psychotic, thought they could fly and threw themselves out of windows etc. In order to stem this misuse and prevent hippies taking over the world completely, the drugs were banned in most countries.

But although psychedelic drugs led to obvious misuse and disastrous effects in many cases there was also a group of researchers who saw great potential in these new drugs. They conducted very serious research with quite remarkable results. Their studies found that psychedelic drugs administered under strictly controlled conditions were able to create results with patients suffering for serious mental conditions where conventional techniques failed. The drugs also often led to opening up to a completely new understanding of consciousness for the researchers that tried them on themselves.

Since the banning of these drugs brought an end to this research, there are now few researchers left with this kind of in-depth knowledge. This is why Roger Walsh and Charles Grob decided to interview fourteen of the most eminent in this field and record their first hand accounts. Among them are Ram Dass (Richard Alpert), Betty Eisner, Gary Fisher, Stanislav Grof, Michael Harner, Laura Archera Huxley, Huston Smith and Myron Stolaroff. They offer their knowledge, anecdotes and sometimes hard-won wisdom in their own personal style.

Between them they present a very interesting account of the 'other side of the arguments' which led to the banning of these drugs. One of the views shared by all of them is that the set and setting is an essential part of their successful use and that it was the lack of understanding of this by people who used the drugs for 'recreational' purposes (as well as experiments by the CIA) that caused so many problems.

Gunnel Minett** is author of **Breath and Spirit** and **Exhale.

philosophy-religion

Cosmos and Psyche

David Lorimer

METAPHYSICS AND THE COSMIC ORDER

Joseph Milne

Temenos Academy, 2008, 74 pp.,
£8.99, p/b
ISBN 978 0 9551934 9 9

With a foreword by HRH the Prince of Wales and an introduction by the late John O'Donohue, these lectures given to the Temenos Academy form a seminal contribution to the philosophical debate of our times. As Philip Sherrard pointed out in his book 'Human Image, World Image' our view of the cosmos is reflected in our view of ourselves. As Joseph Milne puts it, 'the manner in which a civilisation conceives the cosmos fundamentally informs every other aspect of its life and culture.' Hence, 'the real problem lies in the circumscribed view of reality that prevails in our age…the narrow mechanistic view runs contrary to the felt mystery of things.' This is the underpinning metaphysical diagnosis which applies to many of our problems. Significantly, in the light of recent news, Milne comments that technology is neither a problem or solution to a problem – this is like 'blaming a knife for committing a murder.' Legislating against knife culture addresses the symptom rather than the underlying cause.

The key hypothesis running through the book is that there are three distinct categories or modes of thinking: religious or mystical,

philosophical and empirical. They are discrete levels of apprehension and understanding, organised in a hierarchical order. Much of the philosophical confusion of our time arises from failing to make these distinctions. By the religious he means 'the revelatory, sacred Presence in all things, the disclosure of the creative realm as an act within the mind of God.' The philosophical level is about the metaphysical understanding or contemplation of the essence of reality, including epistemology and ontology as well as teleology. The empirical is the realm of observational and inferential deduction of the laws and nature of visible reality. These are distinctive moods of orientation towards reality or engagement with the cosmos.

A key distinction lost in much modern scientific right is that between philosophy and empiricism. It is philosophy that reflects upon knowledge and meaning: 'science cannot investigate the meaning of science or the nature of knowing.' Scientism singularly fails to make this distinction, assuming the truth of a materialistic outlook without calling it into question. All writing about science contains a philosophical element, which should be made explicit. Such insights go back at least as far as the pioneering work of E.A Burtt in the 1920s on the metaphysical foundations of modern science.

Milne puts forward four propositions: that mind or consciousness is already connected with everything, that all things are in communion with all other things, that all things disclose their nature as an act of being, and that man is called to bear witness to the truth of things. These propositions link in with the emerging science of conscious interconnectedness referred to in my review of the Fenwicks' book elsewhere in this issue. The sharp distinction between mind and matter, man and nature, subjective and objective has cut off our sense of participation in the larger scheme of things. It has created a schism 'between things known and the mind that knows', which also had the interesting consequence of shifting human orientation (and concepts of God) away from being and towards the mastery of the will over things. Hence, Milne argues, 'the will to power, utilitarianism, pluralism, relativism and so on are all bound up with the alienated, self-imposed human subject', who is disconnected from the cosmos. However, we are in the process of recovering this connection with the new sense of belonging. This will shift our orientation from mastery towards harmony and bring in a new philosophy of nature more resonant with the kosmos of ancient Greece than Christian narrative of fall and redemption.

The mystical mode corresponds to Bonaventure's eye of contemplation, where the philosophical eye represents reason, and the eye of sense empiricism. Here the category of being is central since 'it is at once known and yet unfolding itself to human knowledge.' Milne's formulations reflect those of Meister Eckhart where there is not only no distinction between the object known and the subject knowing but 'the knowing agent is God himself in the soul, not the soul knowing God. It is God's own knowledge of himself that is communicated to the soul. This is an inside-out statement at the empirical level but one which is well attested by mystics throughout the ages. When these insights are translated down from mysticism to philosophy they become propositional belief systems to be assessed by reason alone, thus creating the modern dichotomy between empirical science and religious belief.

The last lecture is concerned with the loss and recovery of metaphysics, and contains an important moral insight based on the way in which 'nature has ordained all things in such a way that each human being has a unique part to play in the natural flowering of society.' The consequence of this is of inestimable importance: that 'the good of the whole and the good of the individual reinforce and sustain one another.' This is no mere invisible hand, but rather an understanding of how the individual forms part of the whole and the many are related to the One. A new philosophy of an interconnected cosmos can provide a social framework of participation and belonging. Milne goes even further by arguing that 'there is a correlation between the depth of communal understanding and the flowering of civilisation.' Government ministers are unlikely to address knife crime by calling for a new understanding of metaphysics, but this enormously important book highlights the connection and invites us to address the crisis of our civilisation by considering the consequences of its cosmic outlook.

Good Question!

Claudia Nielsen

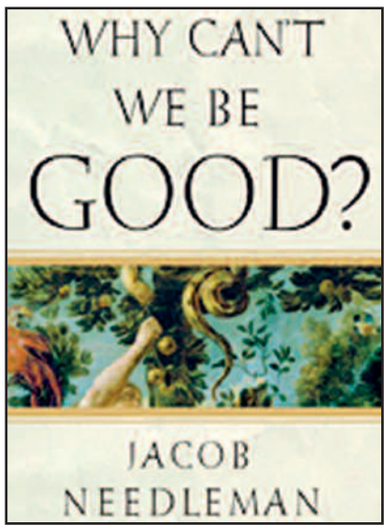
WHY CAN'T WE BE GOOD?

Jacob Needleman

Deep Books 2007, 304 pp, £17.99, h/b, ISBN 978-1585425419,

J P Tarcher/Penguin Putnam 2008 304 pp, £10 p/b, ISBN 978-1585426201

Needleman is a captivating writer who uses his exceptional skills to give voice to profound questions about life and living, which he tackles by weaving his ideas through accounts of his own formative experiences, knowledge from religious writings, examples from scientific experiments and philosophical wisdom from great thinkers, such as Socrates, Marcus Aurelius and others. His style is very engaging, and he builds up real life scenarios with real life people - often himself - who play out the drama of what he is trying to explain. In exploring why we can't be good, Needleman looks at human nature and how we engage with the world in a way that feels personal and familiar – for it is also our own story. The title is very apt and describes exactly what the book is about: we *want* to be good, but we fail in our endeavours. Why is that? The book does not concern itself with the nature of evil, it goes in search of what in human nature determines the difficulty that we have in living up to our true nature, which he maintains – and with which both Plato and I agree - is good. Philosopher and religious scholar Jacob Needleman is professor of philosophy at San Francisco State University and former director of the Center for the Study of New Religions at the Graduate



Theological Union, Berkeley. He is a prolific writer, and amongst his many books are *Time and Soul*, *Lost Christianity* and *Money and the Meaning of Life.*

From various angles, Needleman demonstrates that human nature is essentially good and that we are happiest when we can embody our true nature. This is when we can exercise our freedom, not *from* something, but freedom *for* something - to be our true Selves. And why can't we be good? Because – he says – 'when we step out into our actual life we act in obedience to our fears, anger, hurts, and religious fantasies' (p. 89).

Needleman brings the book alive by unfolding the exploration within the classroom with real students and we are invited to follow the procedures by observing thoughts and ideas as well as feelings and emotions – which is different and exciting.

What the author brings to the table in trying to understand why we cannot live up to our potential, and which is often overlooked or sidelined, is that *we understand ourselves through our physical bodies*. Our feelings are our reaction to what the world throws at us and feelings reside in body. We feel our emotions and when we are angry, sad, happy, excited etc, we feel it in the body. We 'inhabit' a body and this body is our interface with the physical world, and we will repeat or avoid certain behaviour or situation, depending on whether we wish to re-experience or avoid certain feelings. This is why when negative feelings (fears, anger, hurts) become overwhelming, rather than exploring their source and use the knowledge for insights, we often follow the path of least resistance and avoid them. The English language has this wonderful word 'upset' which covers a whole range of feelings and which we use to fudge the issues! When we feel 'upset', what are we really - angry? sad? guilty? hurt? If we know ourselves better, we can live more authentically, which is the point Needleman makes.

Needleman refers extensively to Socrates because in Socratic dialogue participants are encouraged to 'feel' the answers and not just debate from the intellect. His aim is to teach his students, and consequently the reader, to 'cross' the Socratic threshold. He puts it beautifully:

> It is in the body and through the body that all the energies of man move and live and communicate with each other and it is in the body that all the energies of human life can be studied, discriminated and eventually, as a result of inner struggle, come into harmonious relationship thereby allowing the entry into human life and action of a spiritual force of great power and moral efficacy (p105).

How can we be whole human beings without paying attention to feelings, the channel through which God makes Himself known within us? To become aware and understand our feelings we need to develop attention awareness – and Needleman goes into great detail to demonstrate the importance of our attention in the practice of stepping back from involvement, separating ourselves from emotional reactivity, into observance. The 'force' as he calls it, of attention, has many degrees and levels and the ultimate moral and spiritual development of a person is dependent on the individual's sensitivity to these higher levels of attention. Acting from higher levels means acting from our Inner Conscience, Higher Self or God within. 'The essential work of man is to remember the Self' (p. 185) says Needleman. As part of Creation, we are part of the Creator and the commandment – 'thou shalt have no other God before Me' is another way of saying – be true to yourself and obey no outside god, which then makes the instruction 'love thy neighbour as thyself' easy to follow.

The book is a masterful journey of exploration of human nature in its struggle with living in accordance with its natural tendency. To know that we have the potential to be bad is of course not original, but what Needleman does so beautifully in this book is to show a few important things to help in our understanding of what it means to be a human being: the first is how helpless we are in the face of our basic emotions. Being in the grips of anger, hurt, guilt and fears prevents access to our inborn morality and tendency to the Good. Secondly, it is in the body that we find the voice of our conscience and our feelings are the radar by which we navigate the rapids of life as well as the gateway to our inner, personal, authentic morality. Thirdly, the path to happiness is to act in accordance with this inner morality.

It is true that Needleman identifies as obstacles to our natural desire to be good, reactive emotions and I would have liked to have seen included those proactive tendencies, such as envy, greed, attachment to power, control and physical pleasures, which in my view would paint a more comprehensive picture. Nevertheless, this does not take away the point he wants to make and that is that in principle, we as human beings want to be good but we can't. And the reason we can't is because our lower needs usurp our higher desires and we are pulled down in our endeavours. However if, whilst fighting our corner with the help of our intellect we can keep in touch with our feelings and focus our attention on our inner 'knowing' we can become what we are really meant to be – good!

Claudia Nielsen *is a humanistic psychotherapist and runs the SMN London Group.*

Progressive Spirituality

David Lorimer

THE NEW SPIRITUALITY

Gordon Lynch

I.B. Tauris, 2007, 218 pp., £45, h/b – ISBN 978 1 84511 413 8 (also p/b 978 1 84511 414 5)

A SOCIOLOGY OF SPIRITUALITY

Edited by Kieran Flanagan and Peter C. Jupp

Ashgate, 2007, 269 pp., £xx, h/b – ISBN 978 0 7546 5458 2

There is no doubt that the spiritual landscape has changed substantially over the last 50 years. Broadly, church attendance has continued to decline, although there has been a resurgence in fundamentalism. Moreover, two thirds of people in a UK survey by David Hay report having had some form of spiritual experience and nearly a quarter of the population now regard themselves as spiritual rather than religious, although a much smaller proportion take an active part in what Heelas and Woodhead have called the holistic milieu, following their research study in Kendal. Spirituality is variously defined, but is associated with a more inclusive approach and an emphasis on individual experience and the quest for meaning. Over the same period, many new religious movements have come into being, along with organisations like the Findhorn Foundation, Alternatives, the

Wrekin Trust and the SMN itself. The publication of these two books marks a new reflection on and understanding of the field – *A Sociology of Spirituality* is the first volume of its kind.

Having read Lynch's book, I am now happy to identify myself with progressive spirituality as he defines it. He suggests that its component movements are a response to four different perceived needs: 'the need for a credible religion for a modern age; the need for religion which is truly liberating and beneficial for women; the need to reconnect religion with scientific knowledge; and the need for a spirituality that can respond to the impending ecological crisis.' These four imperatives are examined in some detail and with a sure touch. Inevitably, there are gaps in the analysis. For instance, the discussion on science focuses mainly on physics and work of Fritjof Capra and David Bohm, so that contemporary movements in biology in the work of Brian Goodwin, Stuart Kauffman and Rupert Sheldrake are not mentioned; nor is the work of Chris Clarke. Psychology in its transpersonal forms is also underrepresented, as is parapsychology. On the other hand, the work of Matthew Fox and Thomas Berry does feature, and a more comprehensive treatment might have overloaded the book.

The next chapter, entitled 'the ideology of progressive spirituality' is perhaps a misnomer in the sense that progressive spirituality is far from systematic. There are, however, a number of themes identified which run through the movements. Lynch focuses on characteristics such as the unity of the ineffable and immanent Divine, panentheism, mysticism and the Divine feminine, the sacralisation of nature and of the self. These trends have arisen in response to mechanistic, patriarchal and dehumanised understandings of the human being and an overemphasis of the outer aspect of life. Sociologists call this 'the subjective turn', which also gives rise to criticisms that progressive spirituality is incoherent, narcissistic and relativistic. I see this differently: people want to know and experience spiritual realities for themselves, and are no longer satisfied with traditional authoritarian belief systems that allow so little space for silence and contemplation.

A question raised in both books is the extent to which progressive spirituality may in fact be a further manifestation of secularisation. Steve Bruce takes this position in his criticism of the work of Heelas and Woodhead. Looking at the range of activities assessed in the Kendal project, one can legitimately ask oneself how many of these are strictly spiritual. There is also a demographic factor at play in that many participants in the holistic milieu are middle-aged, middle-class women. However, 91% of his respondents do actually say that they regard themselves as a spiritual or religious person. Progressive spirituality as a whole is to be found at the Liberal end of the spectrum, opposing the narrowness of fundamentalism and the secularism associated with a disenchantment of the world and a narrow understanding of the human being.

Commenting on the outlook for progressive spirituality, Lynch observes that its organisational base is still relatively weak, perhaps 'because the hard work needed to negotiate and maintain any kind of personal religious identity and belief system is simply too much for most people.' In addition, 'the liberal values of tolerance, diversity and encouraging the pursuit of individual path' may not result in long-term commitment to an organisation. It is probably true that only a small minority of people will have active involvement with groups advocating progressive spirituality and it may take some time to achieve a high level of collaboration between organisations.

A Sociology of Spirituality contains two studies from the Netherlands, and explores a wide range of connections between spirituality and individualism, gender, identity politics, education and the notion of cultural capital. Linda Woodhead asks why so many women are involved in holistic spirituality, suggesting that they often lack the occupational identity of career-oriented men while at the same time becoming dissatisfied in later life with the roles of wife, mother and nurturer and feeling the need to embark on a deeper level of self exploration. This helps develop a new and stronger sense of self beyond conventional roles and provides new forms of community.

The response of traditional institutions to spirituality has varied. The Catholic Church sees the 'New Age' as a heretical threat, while the term 'spiritual' has been accepted into the UK education system. In 1994, OFSTED defined spiritual development as relating to 'that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal experience which are all enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality.' Ten years later, they add that spiritual development is about 'sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose.' In Holland, people with an 'inner world-view' (constructed by the person) have increased to 87% in 2000, but 73% of these reject any reference to transcendence. This still leaves a quarter of the population open to transcendence, a figure similar to the UK one referred to above.

In their conclusion, the editors note that 'Whatever their differences, all contributors seem to agree that spirituality has distinct capacities to illuminate matters of religion, the self and culture in ways that other concepts cannot. Many vistas of sociology are opened up by the concept of spirituality, however difficult it is to define.' Of the two books reviewed here, Lynch is the more accessible and sympathetic, while at the same time taking a critical view. The second book is wider in its scope and presents a number of conflicting perspectives. It is also more specialised and in parts technical, written as it is with university students researchers primarily in mind. They both enable the reader to come to grips with the nature of spirituality and its implications for modern culture and are to be welcomed on that account.

A Philosopher who Believes in the Soul

Graham Dunstan Martin

THE TWO SIDES OF BEING: A REASSESSMENT OF PSYCHO-PHYSICAL DUALISM

Uwe Meixner

Mentis, Paderborn, 2004, 486 pp., E36, h/b - ISBN 3897853760

I don't know how things are on the Continent, but in the English-speaking world it is hard to find a professional philosopher who will speak up loudly for such problematic entities as the 'Soul'. 'Speak up loudly,' did I say? Who will even mention that embarrassing word! It is refreshing therefore to come across the present massive book, written in excellent

English, offering a full-scale refutation of contemporary academic materialism / physicalism, and a full-scale defence of what philosophers term 'interactionist substance dualism'. Among others Meixner targets Daniel Dennett, and especially his *Consciousness Explained* (Penguin 1991) (of which Galen Strawson said it should be sued for false pretensions).

It is refreshing too that his exasperation with physicalist arguments often provokes him to polemical wit. Thus he reminds us how Yuri Gagarin, orbiting the Earth in his little spaceship, pronounced that God does not exist because he could not espy Him out of his porthole. Physicalists, he notes, go in for exactly this same argument. Thus Dennett, Susan Blackmore and others will say (quite rightly) that science cannot find a conscious inner self in the brain, and (quite wrongly) that therefore no such entity could possibly exist. As Meixner says, the physicalists' 'scientific' arguments against dualism all have this same form: they are 'Gagarin arguments'. In fact if consciousness isn't in the brain this is evidence not for its non-existence, but for its being non-material! (Physicalists take a very narrow view of science.)

Characteristically they also detest Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*. Though, needless to say, humans have believed in souls as well as bodies since well before the dawn of history, they charge Descartes with the sole responsibility for this belief, and take every opportunity they can to denigrate, even to misrepresent, him. Why this hatred (or is it in fact terror?) of Descartes? The answer, Meixner argues, is that Descartes showed, quite irrefutably, that one can doubt everything except one's own consciousness and its present contents. The physicalists by contrast wish to declare consciousness — the very source of all knowing – trivial or non-existent and turn it into a 'collection of cheap tricks', 'as Dennett is happy to express himself.' (p 97)

How do the physicalists treat dualists other than Descartes? With silence. Edmund Husserl for instance, who again and again pointed out that 'the physical world is for you in no other way than as a never completed sum-content of your consciousness' is handled like most other continental philosophers – i.e. he is ignored. Physicalists (says Meixner) see the world upside down. They have placed blind, dumb matter in the centre where consciousness should be; and banished consciousness to the periphery.

Yet if anything should be doubted, it is the reality of matter rather than of mind. For we never encounter material objects without the encounterer, i.e. without our own consciousness being present. 'Material objects are one pole in a complex that has two poles, the other pole being *we*.' (p 154) Thus, matter is in at least as much need of verification and explanation as is consciousness.

Meixner goes on to give us a wide overview of the current philosophical arguments. Thus he deals in convincing detail with Searle's Chinese Room, with the inverted spectrum argument (which he finds entirely valid), and with Jackson's 'knowledge' argument (in which 'Mary' has learnt all the scientific facts about the colour *red*, but has never experienced it). He deals with the claim that an immaterial mind cannot influence a material body because (allegedly) 'the physical world must be causally closed.' He raises the evolutionary issue, namely why, if consciousness is useless – a mere luxury addition – has it evolved to be universal among animals? He mentions George Cantor, the mathematician who made infinity respectable, and invented an extraordinary mathematics of the infinite. Can such notions be grasped by the human mind, asks Meixner, if it is purely material?

Dennett, in *Consciousness Explained*, (p 71) writes: '[A theory of mental events] will have to be constructed from the third-person point of view, since *all* science is constructed from that perspective.' But, as Meixner points out, the third-person point of view *does not exist as such*, since it is created from the first-person point of view. That is to say, the objective is constructed from the subjective, the truths of science being simply those which properly qualified individual scientists – every one of them a subjectivity! — agree about. And their agreement is always provisional.

One never agrees with everything in other people's books. I have not yet grasped Meixner's theory of free will (or mental causation). And I am unhappy with his claim that anything I can fully and convincingly imagine 'must be possible'; and that since I can imagine being disembodied, this shows my inner self is non-material. As someone who has written fantasy fiction, I am perfectly happy imagining myself disembodied; but I would also judge that the imagination has few limitations, and cannot therefore be used to determine the limits of the possible.

Meixner's English is excellent, showing only occasional signs of its German origin. His book is designed for philosophers, is therefore sometimes technical, but those acquainted with these controversies will find it crystal clear.

I have not recently come across a philosophical work defending the reality of the soul, which covers the whole 'landscape' of these contemporary controversies, and which does so with such conviction. Meixner shows that many of the opposition's central arguments are quite tawdry and unfair – and that they are particularly fond of begging the question. This is, in my view, a work of major importance, and let us hope it is the first swallow of a long dualist summer.

Graham Dunstan Martin's** latest book is **Living on Purpose

Where is the Moral Compass Really Pointing?

Gunnel Minett

HOW JESUS BECAME CHRISTIAN

Barrie Wilson

Weidenfeld & Nicolson, New York, Hardcover, 2008, 336 pages, £20
ISBN-13: 978-0297852001, ISBN-10: 0297852000

Not too long ago parliament voted on new legislation regarding abortion and embryo research. The issues were regarded as so important and complex that MPs were allowed to follow their faith-based consciences, their personal moral compass, rather than following party political lines.

Earlier on, Archbishop Rowan Williams caused a storm suggesting religious beliefs should be allowed to influence the legal system more than is the case today. Here it was not the religious aspect as such that caused the strong reaction. It was more the fact that he made a reference to Islam when he presented this suggestion.

Every morning the radio news includes 'thought for the day' where prominent religions leaders relate current issues to their specific religion. Christian spokespeople talk about what Jesus would have said,

thought or done, if he was here today. They do this with great confidence and authority, assured that they know their Bible well and therefore can interpret Jesus's views in relation to current affairs.

In other words religions still plays an important role in our society - and rightly so, many will argue. Religion has always provided the moral compass in human culture. Without it we would deteriorate to chaos and immorality. Regardless of which religion we adhere to, we simply need religion to keep us from doing wrong in life.

Christianity, as well as Judaism and Islam, is based on historical facts. The holy books tell a story of what happened a long time ago. The historical facts are important. But do we really know what happened? In the last century a number of new texts were discovered that has made many religious historians review the biblical facts and suggest a very different story than the version presented by the Christian church.

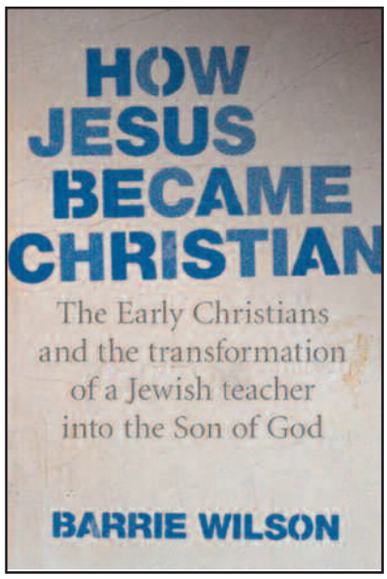
This book certainly offers such an alternative view. It provides a thorough analysis of the complex political situation in the area during the time of Jesus's birth and how this plays an important role in what was to follow. But more than that, by analysing the New Testament texts, their age, the order in which they are presented etc., and comparing this with other texts that for various reasons were not included in the Bible, Professor Wilson has arrived at a very different picture.

According to Wilson, Jesus never tried to break away from Judaism to form Christianity. On the contrary – Jesus's message was that people should follow the Torah, the Jewish law to the letter. Then, in strict accordance with the Old Testament, the kingdom of heaven would appear on earth. The signs were right and he expected a very real change to take place in Israel, not in a heavenly realm. Jesus was above all a political leader. This is why he was crucified. He was not just strictly Jewish, Wilson concludes, he had nothing to do with (and would have been against) the formation of Christianity.

In effect, Christianity initially developed quite independently. It was purely the result of Paul's teaching and had nothing to do with Jesus, Wilson argues. It was not until the Pro-Christian movement wanted a proper 'pedigree', from a more established religion (such as Judaism) to increase its credibility towards the Romans, that the Pro-Christians deliberately set out to incorporate Jesus as one of their key figures. The result of this deliberate campaign was Christianity as we know it today.

Wilson's view is that the Christian story was deliberately subjected to 'spin' by its leaders to appeal to potential new members. Unlike Judaism, Christianity is based on a Hellenistic worldview. According to Paul, rather than following the Jewish law, faith was the key feature. In his religious experiences, Paul met God within, as a result of faith. To emphasise Paul's focus on faith, later Pro-Christians simply changed the story. Jesus was given a divine status, presented with a (virgin) birth story (as so often in the Hellenistic world) and the later gospels angled the Jesus story to match their needs. But this was added by the Christians, not by Jesus's initial followers, who distanced themselves from these ideas, and continued to live as a separate Jewish group. The fact that Christianity simply presented a 'cover-up' version to match their needs, has meant that conflict was built-in to Christianity from the very beginning. And as we all know, religion has continued to play a major role in most conflicts in human history.

Regardless of whether we agree with Wilson's controversial conclusions as such, he presents convincing arguments, based on existing historic facts and scriptures. More than anything it brings the credibility of the conventional Christian version into question. And since historic facts play an important role in Christianity, this does of course mean a less stable reference point for contemporary Christian in their interpretations of Jesus's words and thought in relation to contemporary issues.



One can only hope that rather than causing more conflict within Christianity, books like this will assist the long overdue debate as to how to best provide a moral compass for all human beings, regardless of faith. With the help of science to explain 'miracles' as well as human behaviour in general, good and bad, the end result may hopefully be a new 'secular moral compass'. Not only would that mean a more egalitarian scenario, with more personal freedom and responsibility for the individual. It may hopefully also help to heal the split between religion and science in a positive way. It would of course require a willingness from scientists as well as religious leaders to change their current positions. So perhaps we should not hold our breaths just yet.

Questioning Christian Origins

David Lorimer

THE JESUS PAPERS

Michael Baigent (SMN)

HarperElement, 2006, 321 pp., £16.99, h/b – ISBN 0 00 723642 5

Many readers will be familiar with Michael Baigent's work on Christian origins, based on original research, exploration and a wide network of personal contacts. Modernist scholars of the late 19th century came close to demolishing the scriptural basis of Christianity, and their work is now being revisited by contemporary authors. The book has a number of strands. One of the first is that crucifixion was standard punishment for sedition, which enables Baigent to argue the case that Jesus was a zealot and was therefore crucified primarily for his political activity. This political context, he argues, has been largely expunged from history, and the Jewish origins of Jesus's thought to have been played down. In the course of the early centuries of the Christian era, the Christ of faith was gradually built up into a full-scale mythology, which was consolidated by the compilation and editing of the books that eventually became the New Testament. History was interpreted using theological criteria, and a centralised orthodoxy

was established. This process was not completed until around 397 at the Council of Carthage.

A further contention is that Jesus survived the crucifixion and that there are sources to indicate that he was still alive around 45 AD. This assertion alone, if incontrovertibly established, would be sufficient to undermine the entire doctrinal structure of Christianity. The final proof, however, still remains tantalisingly out of reach. Baigent discusses the circumstances surrounding the crucifixion in considerable detail, using his response to the question about whether taxes were due to Caesar as a reason for the zealots turning against him. However, what if this text itself was a later interpolation designed to paint Rome in a better light? All one can do at this distance in time is to try to unravel the significance of these texts. Jesus's attitude to women is explained by his likely connection with the Jewish Temple of Onias in Egypt and his association with the Therapeutae rather than the Essenes. Baigent also argues that he returned there after the 'crucifixion'.

Another and different strand examines ancient initiation ceremonies, which also involves some first-hand exploration in Baia; this makes fascinating reading. It is well known that initiation rites are connected with death and rebirth, hence the use of tunnels emerging into the light and underground chambers. Baigent cites the important work of Peter Kingsley on Parmenides and examines other symbols of initiation and transformation such as Jacob's ladder. It may also be the case that the resurrection of Lazarus is in fact a description of an initiation ceremony. These rites are associated with the path of gnosis or inner knowledge rather than the authoritarian structures of faith.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have provided a new understanding of this early Christian period, describing both the messianic Jewish context at the time, and also the theological clash between the original church of Jerusalem headed by Jesus's brother James and the teachings of Paul. All this highlights the difference between the Jewish tradition of Jesus and the Christ myth, or the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. The problem for many contemporary scholars is that myth is not history. Baigent concludes that 'to base truth upon the written word makes it vulnerable to all the problems of interpretation and translation, to say nothing of religious distortion. The danger is that books foster a dependence upon belief rather than knowledge.' He argues for first-hand experience and exploration rather than second-hand acceptance of tradition.

The general reader does not have access to all the sources or arguments cited, but can assess the case as presented. The book reinforces for me the dangers inherent in literalistic fundamentalism based on such shaky foundations, and makes one wonder what other texts and discoveries will emerge in the next 20 years which may transform public understanding of the origins of Christianity. In some senses we now live in a new era of gnosis, which encourages individuals to take more responsibility for their own spiritual development – books such as these are part of a process of liberation from superstition, but are bound to stir up controversy among traditionalists in the process.

A Gurdjieff Anthology

Tilo Ulbricht

THE INNER JOURNEY:
Views from the Gurdjieff Work
Edited by Jacob Needleman

Morning Light Press, 2008, 353 pp., £24.95, p/b – ISBN 9781 596750 210

This book is a collection of contributions to the magazine *Parabola.* When it was started in 1976, the first editorial stated:
'Parabola has a conviction that human existence is significant, that life essentially makes sense in spite of our confusions, that man is not here on earth by accident but for a purpose, and that whatever that purpose may be demands from him the discovery of his own meaning, his own totality and identity. A human being is born to set out on this quest... Every true teaching, every genuine tradition, has sought to train its disciples... to become followers of the great quest for one's self.'

The attitude of *Parabola's* writers and, presumably, at least the majority of its readers, is that there is only one truth, which has always been known, but gets lost and distorted and needs to be rediscovered. The truth has been differently expressed through the ages, according to the conditions of the time and the character of the peoples to which it was brought. The different religious traditions- Christianity, Buddhism and so on- are expressions of that one truth. This book is one of a series from *Parabola,* previous publications including *Views from the Hindu Tradition, Views from the Jewish Tradition,* and others.

Of the 62 contributions to this book, well over half are from previously published books, and there are a few articles also previously published, though not in book form. In addition, there are a few articles specially written for *Parabola,* and about a quarter of the total are interviews, most of which are with disciples of Gurdjieff. These last are therefore the only new material in the book, most of which will be very familiar to those who are attempting to follow this way. Any critique of the book is therefore, in effect, a critique of the choices made over the years by the editors of the magazine itself.

In addition to selections from Gurdjieff's own writings, there are contributions from his principal disciple, Jeanne de Salzmann, and other disciples such as Henri Tracol, William Segal, A.R. Orage, P.D. Ouspensky, Maurice Nicoll, Lord Pentland, Michel de Salzmann, Pauline de Dampierre, Margaret Flinsch and P.L. Travers. Missing are any extracts from the best writings about Gurdjieff the man, those by de Hartmann, Peters, and Tcheckovitch Those who are not familiar with the voluminous literature on Gurdjieff (*Google* has 958,000 pages) will no doubt dip in. Whether they strike gold will not only depend on their 'luck' as to the page they open, but their preparedness to receive the truth in this form. The 'work', as Gurdjieff's teaching is known, is not a religion or a philosophy, but a practical way, in which the pupil is guided to discover, or rediscover, the truth for himself. Thus, books can be no more than an introduction to a way which depends on an unbroken oral transmission.

The introduction by Jacob Needleman tells us about the key ideas of the teaching, and something about its forms. It does not attempt to address the difficulty of conveying through the written word that the Work is not the teaching. The Work may be described as a mysterious hidden current of energy which is only visible from time to time, elusive, and incomprehensible to the ordinary mind. Indeed, according to Gurdjieff's ideas, only a man in whom the three

principal functions - thought, feeling, and body - are balanced and in harmony, can really understand anything. Only in such an inner state can the 'work' appear. One can imagine a dogmatic statement of the ideas- some have already been attempted - but there could never be a dogmatic statement of the work itself.

Readers may like to know that one of the articles reprinted here is Michel de Salzmann's modestly entitled 'Footnote to the Gurdjieff Literature', a masterly and impartial survey of the subject.

Professor Tilo Ulbricht *is a retired scientist. He is a poet, and one of the editors of the internet magazine In-Between: www.in-between.org.uk*

psychology-consciousness studies

A New Role for Religions

David Lorimer

INTEGRAL SPIRITUALITY

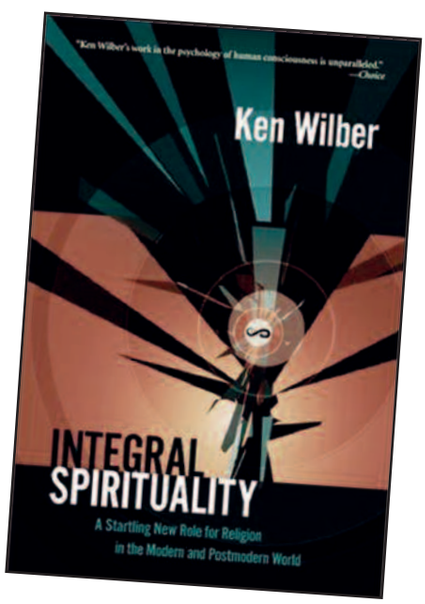
Ken Wilber

Integral Books, 2006, 313 pp., $22.95, h/b – ISBN 1 59030 346 6

Integral Spirituality is Ken Wilber's most complete and systematic statement of his model, with which many readers will be acquainted from his writings over the past 30 years. It is more than a book; it is a textbook requiring close and demanding study. At the same time, it can be read at a more summary level without completely absorbing the massive amount of detail. The introduction is an overview of the integral approach, and is followed by a chapter on what he calls, somewhat dauntingly, integral methodological pluralism. All of this is situated within his four quadrant approach involving states of consciousness, stages or levels and lines of development (e.g. from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric – I will come back to this) and types (boy-girl). The dimensions of experience are categorised in terms of I, we, it, or art, morals and science, or self, culture and nature corresponding again to beautiful, good and true.

There are so many possibilities to discuss in this book that this review will focus on only two of them: the relationship between the inner phenomenology and outer structuring of subjective experience, and the role of religions in helping their followers move through to more universal stages of development. Integral methodological pluralism as defined involves eight fundamental and seemingly irreducible methodologies or perspectives for gaining reproducible knowledge. If I experience my own 'I' , from the inside as it felt experience, then this is phenomenology. If I approach the 'I' from outside as an objective observer, then this is structuralism, a connecting pattern.

It is important to note that all such perspectives are themselves embedded in bodies and cultures, as postmodernism insists. The great wisdom traditions have been assaulted by both modernism and post-modernism. Modernism demanded objective evidence, postmodernism asserts the social construction of reality, including science. The great wisdom traditions belong in their own realm, namely the interior of the individual with all its states and stages of consciousness (Upper Left). Their claims can only be undercut by reducing interior experience to one of the other methodologies. Wilber sums this up by saying that 'the double death suffered by the contemplative traditions in the last few centuries involved the taboo (or ignorance) of subjectivity or interiority that was displayed by late modernity, and the taboo (or ignorance) of inter-subjectivity displayed by the traditions themselves.'



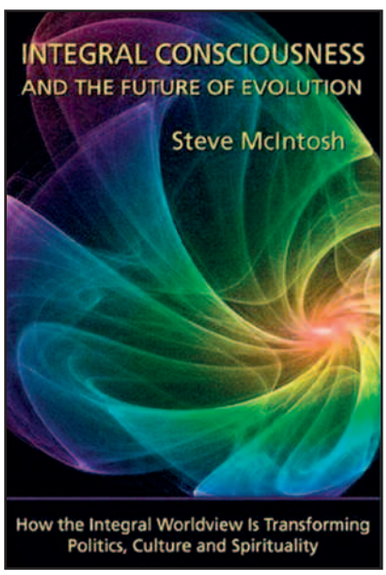
Wilber's map thus reinstates the validity of spiritual experiences within a larger epistemological and methodological scheme. Another very useful distinction he makes is between inside and interior. The brain is inside the head, but consciousness is interior to the brain. What can be viewed by means of instruments can only be the neural correlates of consciousness, which does not entail that God can be reduced to a brain state. The correct procedure is what he calls simul-tracking, whereby the results are understood in terms of the appropriate quadrants, none of which can be reduced to the other. A further important danger is elaborated in 'the myth of the given' to which many other scientists succumb. This consists in the belief that reality is simply given to me, that the consciousness of an individual will deliver truth, that the mirror of nature is an adequate methodology, and signifies a failure to understand that truth is in part instructed by intersubjective cultural networks. Even a cursory reading of this book will serve as a cure to this ailment, which Wilber diagnoses in a number of prominent writers in a special appendix.

The second issue defines a new role for the major world religions. Wilber observes that the 50 and 70% of the world population is still at the ethnocentric or lower levels of development, in other words they have yet to reach worldcentric or postconventional levels. Most of these people are adherents of the world's great religions. In a foretaste of a forthcoming book, Wilber notes that terrorists have the same basic psychograph: 'amber' (conformist, traditional) beliefs driven by a 'red' sense of self which is egocentric and power-driven. The basic social problem is that the 'orange' of modern science makes no room for such beliefs. Worse still, modernity confuses the mythic (superstitious) level of spiritual intelligence with the whole of spiritual intelligence leading to the familiar stand-off between rational science and mythic religion. This position also entails committing the 'pre-trans fallacy' of supposing that one can equate the pre-rational with the trans-rational.

Within this larger scheme, it is possible to see that atheism and agnosticism are manifestations of orange rationality. Instead of spiritual intelligence being understood as that line of intelligence dealing with the

ultimate concerns, there has been a tendency to claim either that science proves that there is no ultimate reality or that matter is effectively an absolute reality in terms of which everything else needs to be understood. What religions can begin to do is to provide outlets to develop higher stages and higher states, thus responding to the contemplative needs of our time as noted in my review of books on spirituality elsewhere in this issue. The trouble is that it is hard for religious leaders to be too explicit about these stages of development without implying that many of their colleagues are at lower levels. Within such a scheme, liberals are more sophisticated than conservatives; but that does not mean of course that they are better people. One can see exactly this problem in the key debates at the current Lambeth Conference. However, Wilber insists that only religions can help their followers make this leap towards worldcentric, postconventional versions of their own message.

It would be good to open a dialogue between religious leaders and integral theorists, but perhaps the first step is to get books like this one onto the syllabus of university philosophy and psychology departments. It is lamentable that undergraduates can emerge with a degree without ever having heard of an integral approach. They simply do not have an adequate understanding of the place of their discipline or methodology within the larger scheme of knowledge. In particular, their view of the upper left subjective quadrant will in all probability be conditioned by post-modern ideas about the cultural construction of knowledge or the naïve realism of scientific training. This book should be compulsory reading for university lecturers, preferably with an exam at the end to make sure they have understood to the main points. They may well disagree with many details in the argument, but will surely admit the necessity for some such overall organising schema for knowledge.



It's Great to Integrate

Martin Lockley

INTEGRAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE FUTURE OF EVOLUTION

Steve McIntosh

Paragon House, 2007, 371 pp., US$24.95, p/b - ISBN 978-1-55778-867-2

This as a confidently-cogent book, and well worth reading. In fact I will be adopting it for my Evolution of Consciousness class at the University of Colorado. Why? Because, especially for students, it conveys nice clear messages. Author Steve McIntosh, President of Now and Zen Inc., uses his legal and business background to market natural lifestyle products and lecture and write on Integral Consciousness (IC) with self-assurance and optimism. As a resident of Boulder, Colorado, one might put McIntosh the company of Ken Wilber, and the late Richard Keck (Network 77) as representing a contemporary generation of 'Colorado' authors addressing consciousness studies from high in the Rocky Mountains. McIntosh boldly suggests that you will evolve while reading the IC message. [I see, I see - and I think you will]!! So what is IC, and its close cousin Integral Philosophy?

My understanding is that IC, a term coined by Jean Gebser, and much explored by Ken Wilber, is a species or 'structure' of trans-rational consciousness that transparently subsumes other 'less integrated,' mental, mythic, magic and archaic predecessor structures. These structures diversify or evolve throughout human history (and ontogeny). Each individual and culture tends to have a centre of gravity in one or more of these structures while, at different times, also revealing the potential to manifest all structures to some degree. McIntosh essentially agrees. He labels the stages of cultural evolution as Archaic, Tribal, Warrior, Traditional, Modern, Post-Modern, Integral and Post-Integral (the latter barely mentioned) and estimates the percentage of the world's population centred in each structure. Next McIntosh's 'integrates' this progressive linear approach with a spiral dynamics model, citing the work of psychologist Clare Graves, and sees an alternation between collective (tribal, traditional, post-modern) and individual (warrior, modernist, integral) emphasis as the pendulum spirals rhythmically from one structure to the next, and each mode or thesis is dethroned by its antithesis, but partly preserved by subsequent synthesis. [This model has much in common with the 'Fourth Turning' model espoused by Strause and Howe for the shorter but nevertheless rhythmic 4-generation time scale of the *seculum* or century: see Network 79]. Thus, the synthesis part of the thesis-antithesis-synthesis process is inherently 'integral' [manifesting cybernetic, feedback dynamics] that avoid throwing babies out with the bathwater.

According to McIntosh, Integral Philosophy is a product of IC whose founders include Hegel, Bergson, Whitehead, Teilhard de Chardin, Gebser, Baldwin (who influenced Piaget, Maslow, Graves and others), Habermas and Wilber. Heidegger and Aurobindo also get mentioned, the latter supposedly the first to explicitly mention the term in connection with evolutionary philosophy. Although some may object that this exclusively male list includes many not traditionally regarded as 'academic' philosophers (whatever that ill-defined term may mean), some say, and I agree, that academic philosophy needs to evolve beyond its futile scholasticism. McIntosh chooses an excellent Richard Tarnas quote which lambasts 20th century philosophy for 'doubting all, applying a systematic skepticism to every possible meaning… a futile exercise in linguistic game playing… an intellectually imperious procedure that has produced an existential and cultural impoverishment.' In short, 'subordination to science' producing a 'technocratic domination of nature.'

As an alternative, Integral Philosophy challenges materialism's 'strong form of antimetaphysical metaphysics that continues to dominate many critical fields of human knowledge.' Instead of

denying the reality of subjective inner life, Integral Philosophy in fact shows that such 'dynamic systems of consciousness and culture actually exists.' In the second half of the book, McIntosh evaluates many of these philosophies, extracting a complex schema of structure and organisation. Although categorisation can be misleading - and Wilber has been so criticised - it helps self awareness to recognise which of one's own belief systems may be traditional, modernist, postmodernist, integral and so on. McIntosh made me think constructively about this.

He also reevaluates Wilber's 4 quadrant model, concurring with some that it fails to differentiate between natural and artificial holons. There is a 'kind of discontinuity once the timeline passes the point of reflection.' Thus, the biological evolution of the human brain (upper right quadrant) effectively stops at the 'complex neocortex' stage, even though changes in electrical activity (Wilber's functions-SF1-SF3) may be physically detectable. McIntosh allows this SF1-SF3 hierarchy of holons, but objects to the corresponding structures in the collective, lower right, quadrant, and so does not regard human social constructs (such as villages, city states, nations and global polities) as naturally evolving holons. Nevertheless, such artifacts, designed by humans, can develop their own internal collective 'holonic' character and a subjective culture or life of their own. This stresses the complex interplay between objective and subjective dynamics. So McIntosh provides alternatives to Wilber's categories while generously lauding him for having done 'for the internal universe what Descartes' philosophy did for the external universe.'

McIntosh builds his own integral model attempting to outline the structures of the human mind using the threefold platonic framework (I, We, It) and its equivalents (e.g., Art, Morals, Science, or Beauty, Goodness, Truth). Likewise Feeling, Willing, Thinking [cf., Steiner] also fits the triad structure. McIntosh's attempts to show triadic organisation reiterating repeatedly in all 4 of Wilber's quadrants, are too detailed to outline (herein) without using McIntosh's various recursive diagrams, but they are intriguing to follow. The message is that structural systems exist, giving us something 'definite' to debate. Such IC dialogue occupies a 20-page interview in the latest issue of *What is Enlightenment* (WIE) magazine. Good exposure for a first book! Here McIntosh suggests many answers to wide ranging and complex questions ranging from Islam and Iraq to Africa and world governance. Will he be criticised for being too optimistic? Perhaps by some, but new paradigms (IC) are often ignored and reviled before being seriously evaluated and accepted. I'm all for constrictive debate and an optimistic outlook.

The book's subtitle is 'the future of evolution.' Although Niels Bohr said 'prediction is very difficult, especially about the future, ' visionaries like Teilhard de Chardin speculated positively about future evolution, and McIntosh's optimistic brand of integralism certainly antidotes much gloomy postmodernism by reminding us that life spirals on, complicating linear progress by injecting regressive tendencies (problems) that 'periodically' and temporarily counteract the forward progress (solutions) required to overcome them. So do global cultures really 'progress' along historical lines similar to those mapped out by progressivist evolutionists? [Biological evolution compensates for growth in one direction, towards mature, over-developed, 'peramorphic' brains, by reciprocal developments towards the opposite juvenile (paedomorphic) pole. Much evidence suggests that so called 'primitive' cultures preserve what advanced cultures lose (and the same goes for consciousness structures). So integration may require the same balance of regression and progression that we strive for in our own lives and families when trying to integrate mature wisdom with a youthful, spirit. Perhaps humanity needs to do the same].

McIntosh's IC Philosophy is enthusiastic. He modifies Wilber's framework and presents IC with a flavour that differs from Gebser's version or the personal, experiential Cosmic Consciousness of Richard Bucke [although all manifest what Bucke called enhanced moral and intellectual sensibilities]. Progressivist claims that IC has practical (geo-political) and 'morally fragrant' applications in the global community are bold, desirable and hopefully forthcoming in a more enlightened future world. All highlight a desire for a shift in consciousness. A transparent IC (*sensu* Gebser) sees the limitations of progressivism without dismissing its role. As has been discussed in many a forum, over-enthusiastic progressivist aspirations, can have pitfalls that worry skeptics. Nevertheless, the progressing arm of the spiral is necessary for an integral agenda, and the human desire for evolutionary gain remains a perennial consciousness quest, admirably tackled in this intriguing and optimistic book.

P.S. My hand luggage and advanced copy of this book were stolen in Madrid airport. Hopefully the perpetrator is bilingual and taking the opportunity to preview the Integral Consciousness message.

Towards the Primacy of Consciousness

David Lorimer

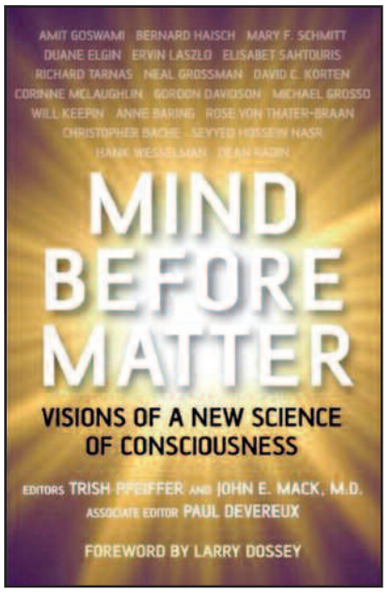
MIND BEFORE MATTER

Edited by Trish Pfeiffer, John. E. Mack (late SMN) and Paul Devereux (SMN), foreword by Larry Dossey (SMN)

O Books, 2007, 281 pp., £11.99, p/b – ISBN 978 1 84964 057 6

A central concern of the SMN Science and Esoteric Knowledge group was the contention that consciousness is fundamental rather than secondary and dependent on matter. This volume invites contributors to consider the implications of the primacy of consciousness and its implication that everything is One and interconnected. As John Mack observes, world-views matter because they structure our perceptions and define how we experience ourselves in relation to the universe. This will be a familiar position to readers of this journal. The book is divided into four sections: science, philosophy, psi and communion. Each section contains a useful summary of the tenty-plus papers contained within it, which together build up the powerful vision of the book.

There are many well-known contributors such as Ervin Laszlo, Richard Tarnas, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Anne Baring, Dean Radin and Elisabet Sahtouris. For me, two of the most important essays are those by Elisabet Sahtouris and Anne Baring. Elisabet makes the arresting point that it is utterly illogical to eliminate the notion of God as an inventor engineer while keeping the concept of nature as mechanism. The mechanistic metaphor is so pervasive and familiar that this anomaly has gone largely unnoticed. Ironically, mechanism is defined as 'the purposive assembly of parts' while mechanistic scientists



repudiate the notion of purpose in nature, where strictly speaking the notion of a purposeless mechanism is self-contradictory. Elisabet's exposition of the axioms of Western science is as clear and comprehensive as any I have seen, as is her explanation of the new assumptions for an integral science. This is all set out with logical precision. The new model is based on a living universe that is 'not a collection of accidental biological entities evolving on rare planets of a non-living universe through the mechanics of natural selection, but a holarchic, evolving, intelligent process intrinsic to the cosmos itself, in short, as *the* natural process of the cosmos itself, as self-organising expressions of a cosmic field of consciousness.'

Anne Baring gives voice to the strong emergence of the feminine principle as a response to our cultural imbalance. A vision of interconnectedness and interdependence entails a new sense of responsibility, especially in relation to Nature. Anne argues, rightly in my view, that 'if the sacredness, oneness and interconnectedness of life were truly perceived, we would have a new ethical and moral framework within which to assess our actions.' This would also give us a criterion to apply to the development of technology in terms of benefit or harm, although this would not put a stop to the arguments, since different people have varying ideas about what is beneficial or harmful, and financial return is currently the key criterion. Nor are these ideas simply abstractions, since many people have now experienced a sense of light and love pervading the ground of consciousness from which they are not intrinsically separated.

The essays in this important volume provide a convergent series of arguments and perspectives that help the reader build up the implications of a world-view based on the primacy of consciousness. The elements of this rising culture are all in place but we have yet to reach a tipping point in society where the key propositions in this book are regarded as self-evident. Books like this, and indeed many reviewed in these pages, contribute to a more general raising of awareness and corresponding realisation of the necessity of a shift in worldview. These ideas now need to be more widely expressed in the media as they articulate what many people are sensing at a deeper level.

A Good Death

David Lorimer

THE ART OF DYING

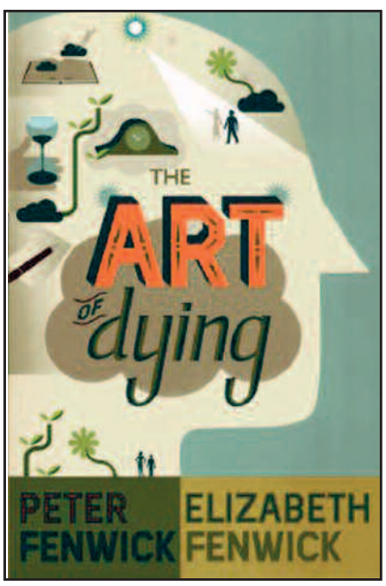
Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick (SMN)

Continuum, 2008, 251 pp., £9.99, p/b – ISBN 978 0 8264 9923 3

Subtitled 'a journey to elsewhere' the latest book by Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick breaks new ground in our modern understanding of experiences surrounding death. In 1886, only a few years after the founding of the Society for Psychical Research, two substantial volumes (1,300 pages in all) appeared entitled 'Phantasms of the Living', by Edmund Gurney, Frederic Myers and Frank Podmore. They cover much of the same ground as the Fenwick's book in terms of deathbed visions and coincidences, and the authors approach the cases with the same open-minded spirit of enquiry. I read them over 25 years ago when researching 'Survival?'. Their conclusions and implications point in the same direction as the Fenwicks, highlighting the difficulties of explaining such experiences within the Procrustean framework of scientific materialism. The Fenwicks coin two new terms: ADEs – actual death experiences – for cardiac arrest cases, and ELEs – end of life experiences – which cover much of the material in this book. The book is based on 1,000 new cases sent in and engages palliative carers as well as patients and their relatives.

The main types of experience covered are deathbed visions where the dying see relatives shortly before death, deathbed coincidences where the dying appear to relatives at the time of their death, apparitions to bereaved relatives, visions of light and mist around the dying body, and strange coincidences involving stopping clocks and even birds. The cases cited are a rich qualitative resource which builds up a coherent pattern within the mind of the reader, containing as they do common but independently established features.

Two chapters are devoted to discussing explanations of these visions and coincidences in terms of drugs, organic confusional states, beliefs and expectations. None of these seem an adequate explanation of the data. More strongly than this, the standard brain-based and epiphenomenal view of consciousness cannot even begin to engage with let alone explain these cases. They violate in a coherent fashion the very basis of materialism, namely that conscious experience is exclusively a property of localised brain function. By the same token, they point to the need for an extended view of consciousness. The term 'coincidence' is a dangerous one in this field, since it implies that there may nothing to explain in cases where a relative unexpectedly sees an apparition of a dying person at the time of their death or even experiences their symptoms from a distance. This indicates an underlying field connectedness of consciousness which is subject to human intention or synchronicity, especially in cases where clocks stop at the time of a person's death (remote PK?). The metaphor of



the journey emerges strongly throughout the book, implying not so much the end as a new beginning.

The later part of the book discusses the unsolved problem of consciousness in relation to NDEs and the experiences outlined in the book. The Fenwicks cite other evidence for the interconnectedness of mind such as Rupert Sheldrake's telepathy experiments, OBEs and what they call TDEs (temporary death experiences) as well as the context of transcendental philosophy that postulates consciousness and mind as fundamental. Scientists can now be encouraged to hone their own minds so as to open up to these hidden breadths and depths for themselves.

In the final chapter there emerges a tension between the model of death as a journey to elsewhere and phrases such as 'the moment before extinction' and the contention that 'it is in the nature of death that there are no survivors. No one can really tell us what it is like.' Elsewhere, they say that 'there are very few accounts of what the subjective review of dying is like – simply because they don't return to tell us and there has been no attempt to investigate this area as it is considered to be scientifically irrelevant.' This statement ignores the vast literature and research on survival in the last hundred years and the contents of David Fontana's cited book. Indeed, as I showed in my own book, the subjective experience of dying maps very well onto the NDE in terms of leaving the body and going on a journey.

The psychological aspects of death are examined in the last chapters, which reflect the title of the book: the nature of a good death. Reconciliation is an important factor, and it seems that the dying can to some extent orchestrate the timing of death. Overall, the Fenwicks conclude that death is a structured and supportive process, and they call for a new education in spiritual care of the dying. Equally, the book is part of a wider movement towards a new, qualitative science of consciousness that is required in order to provide a coherent rational framework for experiences considered anomalous or even impossible within the current materialist paradigm. One can only hope that scientists will not simply ignore the phenomena described here but will begin to make a genuine effort to engage with these experiences and their implications for what it means to be human – the very nature of life and death.

Life after Death Proved (Maybe)

Guy Lyon Playfair

THE EAGER DEAD: A STUDY IN HAUNTING

Archie E Roy (SMN)

Book Guild Publishing, 2008, 590 pp., £18.50, h/b – ISBN 978 1 84624 183 3

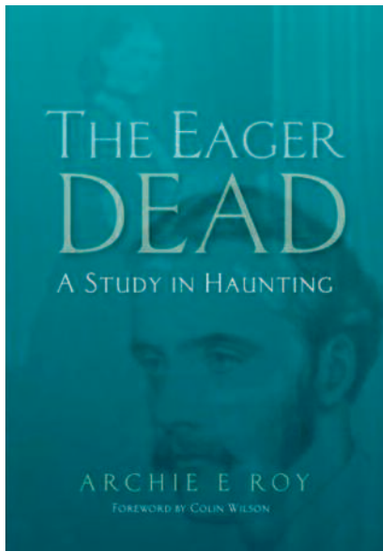
Ask anybody who is reasonably up to speed on the history of psychical research the question 'Where is the best evidence for the survival of human consciousness after bodily death to be found?', and the answer is very likely to be 'In the Cross Correspondences'. This the name given to the long series of messages produced by half a dozen women in three different countries, most of whom did not know any of the others, by means of automatic writing. They began, as far as is known, in 1903 and continued on and off (mostly on) for thirty years.

> The writers were no ordinary mediums. Indeed, only one of them, Leonora Piper, was a professional one, the others being Cambridge classics lecturer Margaret Verrall, her daughter Helen, a woman known during her lifetime only as 'Mrs Willett', and the equally pseudonymous 'Mrs Holland', who turned out to be a sister of Rudyard Kipling. A later member of the team was the Irish writer Geraldine Cummins.

The communicators made it clear who they were right from the start. The first three were Frederic Myers, Edmund Gurney and Henry Sidgwick, all founder members of the Society for Psychical Research. They were later joined by two distinguished classicists, Mrs Verrall's husband Arthur (Cambridge) and Henry Butcher (Edinburgh). The messages were no ordinary greetings from the beyond. In addition to repeated and generally convincing insistence that the communicators were who they said they were, fragments referring to obscure episodes in the Greek and Latin classics began to come through, making little sense until SPR researchers realised that different communicators were sending parts of the same message to different automatists. When they were put together, they fitted as surely as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

In addition to the classical allusions, there some very personal messages suggesting the survival of death of two women, Annie Marshall and Mary Lyttelton, with whom Myers and another prominent SPR member, Arthur Balfour (president, 1893, and Prime Minister 1902-6) had been much in love at the time of the women's premature deaths. There were also signs of afterlife from Balfour's brother Francis who had died in a mountain fall. Thus the Balfours, especially another brother, Gerald, and his sister Eleanor, Sidgwick's widow, became closely involved in events, which only came to an end in 1930 when so much material was still coming through that the SPR researchers could not cope and had to ask the principal surviving automatist, Helen Salter (née Verrall) to stop. By way of encores, Geraldine Cummins then produced two volumes of material plausibly attributed to Myers (Cummins, 1933, 1965).

Fortunately for posterity, a vast amount of the material has been preserved by Balfour's descendants, and it was at the suggestion of Lady Kremer, the present keeper of the archive, that this book came to be written. Professor Roy, himself a former SPR president, is thus the first to attempt a complete history of this saga of Tolstoyan dimensions, from the earliest messages in 1903 to the extraordinary revelation made exactly a century later that Gerald Balfour was the father of the second son of 'Mrs Willett', now known to have been Winifred Coombe-Tennant, a distinguished public servant and delegate to the League of Nations who was also Myers' sister-in-law.



Moreover, it emerges that this early 'designer baby' was planned by the communicators and intended by them to come into the world as a messiah bringing peace to the world. This he failed to do, becoming instead a Benedictine monk.

The author is to be congratulated for what has clearly been a labour of love, a book not likely to become a best seller or find its way into airport shops. Copy editing is less than perfect – a lengthy quote on p.106 is repeated three pages later, there are numerous unsourced references and equally numerous works listed in the Bibliography that are not mentioned in the text. Those grumbles aside, this is unlikely to be surpassed as a basic source of one of the strangest episodes in the history of psychical research. It does indeed provide the best evidence we have for survival, yet it also suggests that those who survive do not always act very rationally.

Guy Lyon Playfair *is the author of twelve books and a council member of the Society for Psychical Research*

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Guarding against Error

David Lorimer

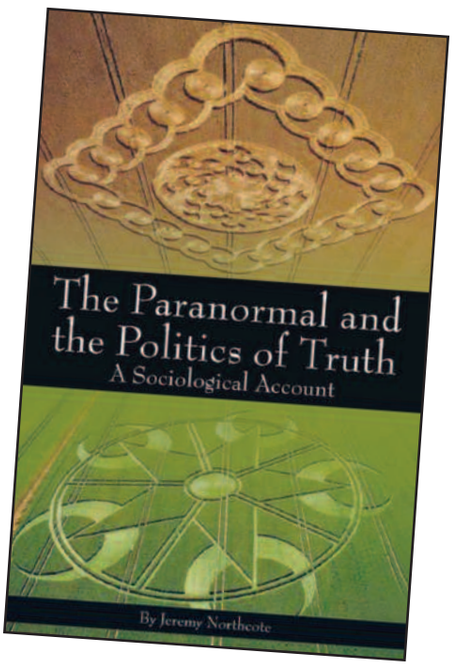
THE PARANORMAL AND THE POLITICS OF TRUTH

Jeremy Northcote

Imprint Academic, 2007, 236 pp., £14.95, p/b – ISBN 978 1 845400 712

Readers of this journal will almost all have a position in the spectrum of possible attitudes towards the paranormal, whatever they take that to mean. They would probably be less familiar with the term 'politics of truth', but it is relatively easy to understand what this means within the overall context of Network concerns. After all, the founders all had an interest in spirituality and parapsychology, and tended to be sceptical about both traditional religion and conventional science. The interest of this book is that it shows how the debate is rooted in wider discursive formations that have come to underlie Western thinking more generally. As a sociologist, the author takes an etic (analyst) view and seeks to understand the nature of the dialogue between so-called sceptics and believers.

After some initial definitions, there follows an interesting chapter on the history of the struggle as it applies both to the Church and to science. Both institutions seek to guard against what they consider to be error - the church regards paranormal phenomena as occult or even satanic. For a while during the Renaissance, it seemed that the category of imagination could be reinstated, but the arrival of a mechanistic and materialistic outlook put paid to this way of thinking. The imagination was consigned to the realm of the nonfactual, irrational and subjective, to be contrasted with the factual, rational and objective. This division continues to this day in the self-styled distinctions between proponents and sceptics.



Northcote does not accept these terms at face value. He remarks that each side tends to caricature and demonise the other. He then explains various types of player in the debate such as scientific oriented paranormal proponents, new agers, occult practitioners, Christians, sceptics and the academic community more generally as well as the general public. Readers are likely to be most familiar with the self-perception of sceptics and their characterisation of opponents as irrational, gullible and immune to evidence. On the other hand, the proponents accuse skeptics of being dogmatic and closed-minded. All of this is analysed in discursive terms in this book. Many people will agree that the differences are due to an ontological incommensurability, in other words, fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality. Pierre Bourdieu is quoted as defining the unquestioned aspect of knowledge as 'doxa'. The conflict arises from divergent doxic assumptions. Northcote notes, interestingly, that neither side tends to question the underlying material-spiritual dichotomy unless it is to reduce one to the other.

The next chapter is devoted to strategies and objectives within the debate, and includes a discussion of labelling, ridicule and ostracism. Many prominent members of the Network have suffered academically as a result of their interest in parapsychology and mysticism. David Jacobs from Temple University and John Mack from Harvard are cited as examples. Academic communities are anxious to protect academia from the incursion of paranormal related ideas (think also of Freud's response to Jung about the rising tide of occultism) and just need to use the ideological strategy of saying that such ideas are pseudoscientific and therefore beyond the pale. Further issues arise when researchers try to publish their results in mainstream journals. When psychology departments advertise for parapsychologists, they will find that it is only sceptics who have been able to publish in rated mainstream journals and the department are of course anxious to keep up their research standing which is measured by this criterion. Hence some of the best candidates find themselves excluded from the shortlist.

The last chapter asks if a positive dialogue is possible, or whether the opposing positions are simply too entrenched. The author invokes the postmodern uncertainty principle, inviting people to become more aware of their own underlying assumptions and to resist the temptation not only to demonise their opponents but also to attribute their position to extraneous social or psychological factors. Only time will tell whether he is right, but in the meantime this book provides a very interesting discussion of the politics of truth in this field.

Awakening from Dreams

David Lorimer

THE CONSCIOUS MIND AND THE MATERIAL WORLD

Douglas M. Stokes

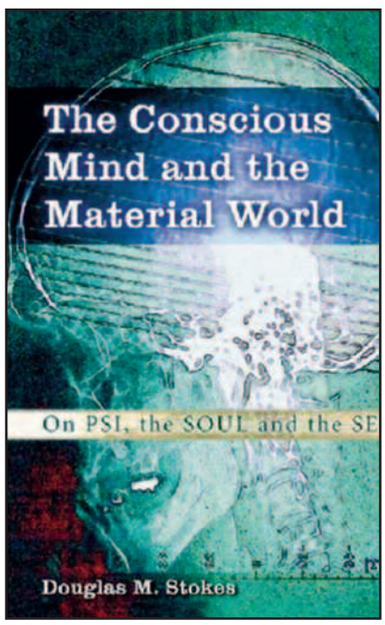
McFarland and Co, 2007, 224 pp., no price given, p/b – ISBN 978 0 7864 3004 8

Douglas Stokes is the author of *The Nature of Mind: Parapsychology and the Role of Consciousness in the Physical World,* which I reviewed ten years ago. Here he turns his attention to the nature of the self in the light of psiand arrives at some rather unusual conclusions. As he explains in his introduction, the first awakening is from what he calls the dream of matter: self cannot be identical with the body, since its components are constantly changing. The next awakening involves the dream of the person with the discovery that we are not the content of our consciousness and memories. Finally, if we thought we were formless and pure consciousness itself, we need to wake up from the dream of Atman and Brahman to realise that we are multiple selves which are constantly transformed and recycled like other components of the universe. Death is understood as 'the rope that frees us from the quicksand of current identities.' Hence, he suggests that our true selves are both much less and much greater than we think. He claims that he finds this conclusion as uncongenial as it may seem to the reader but that it can grow on one. I am not so sure.

The main body of the book consists of a number of chapters about mind and matter, mind and the quantum, spontaneous phenomena as evidence of psi, experimental investigations of psi phenomena and the implications of both spontaneous and experimental work. The book moves on to discuss death and the mind, and the nature of the self in relation to the Self. It is exceptionally well-informed, and contains a long bibliography of sources. The main interest for readers of this journal will be its assessment of psi phenomena and their implications, and the issue of the nature of the conscious self.

Readers will agree that current scientific knowledge is far from complete, and should address psi phenomena; also that spontaneous and experimental work both have a role to play. However, I found a number of individual areas unsatisfactory. For instance, Rupert Sheldrake's staring experiments were questioned on the basis that 'the subject could be responding to differences in the starer's breathing patterns and bodily movements between staring and non-staring trials.' In addition, there is no counter criticism of Richard Wiseman's article about dogs who know their owners are coming home, which Rupert himself published. At the end of his chapter on experimental investigations, Stokes concludes that the sceptics are probably ahead on points – a highly questionable judgment. The discussion of the well-known Chaffin Will case supposes that the dreamer might have picked up cues from his father's behaviour before death, a suggestion which has absolutely no basis in the published accounts. Similar implausible speculations are made about the work of Grof and even Ian Stevenson, including the criticism that the child may have acquired information about previous life through normal means and used this information to construct a past life fantasy or hoax. Stevenson himself investigated and ruled out this possibility in cases where it might have been advanced. The section on survival also omits all references to the Scole Experiment and the cross-correspondences.

The discussion of the nature of the self is less contentious, and covers all well-known positions. Stokes develops the 'Shin' or mini-self theory of Thouless and Wiener, partly because he thinks that split brain research indicates that we have at least two



distinctive selves and perhaps many others as sub-personalities. He goes as far as to claim that 'we may be constantly recycled, awakening in a new body each morning with no memories of are real adventures the day before.' I can't say that this corresponds to my own experience. The reader may or may not agree that the findings of modern cognitive neuroscience to make it more doubtful that major portions of self could survive the death of body – this question is not addressed with direct reference to the evidence. However, it is intriguing to think through the implications of the universe as one of conservation, 'of rearrangement, not destruction' whereby components at all levels are recycled from system to system. There is much with which to agree and disagree in this provocative book, which provides a comprehensive overview of a wide range of issues, along with competing explanations.

ecology-futures studies

The Spiral of Empowerment

David Lorimer

GETTING A GRIP

Frances Moore Lappé

Small Planet Media, 2007, 186 pp., $14.95, p/b – ISBN 978 0 9794142 4 4

URGENT MESSAGE FROM MOTHER

Jean Shinoda Bolen, MD

Conari Press, 2005, 187 pp., $14.95, p/b – ISBN 978 1 57324 353 7

These two powerful books by leading women activists invite readers to take a different view of the global predicament. Both are well known for their previous work and send a common message that patriarchal ways of thinking and acting must now be balanced by the power of the feminine. It takes such clear thinking to come to a full realisation of the assumptions which we take for granted. Both books also represent a call to action and challenge existing forms of political campaigning and even definitions of key terms.

Lappe's book is divided into three sections: clarity, creativity and courage and in the face of a world gone mad. The key parameters of her book

suggest a move from a spiral of powerlessness to a spiral of empowerment, both of which are illustrated on the inside front and back covers of the book. This corresponds to a shift from what she calls 'thin democracy' to 'living democracy'. Thin democracy corresponds with elections plus the market, where elections and policies are very clearly influenced by lobbyists, and market power tends to become more concentrated as companies seek to control markets. This leaves people with a sense of powerlessness, while living democracy is a set of dynamic system qualities driven by core human values. Throughout the book there is a series of tables contrasting old with new ways of thinking. Instead of wondering whether human nature is good, we should actively elicit the goodness in human nature.

Both books encourage the activation of local circles and give examples of effective campaigning on a variety of issues. We need to redefine our associations with the word 'power' so as to stress our capacity to make a difference – this means redefining our cultural norms and expectations and setting out to build trust. Lappe defines ten acts of democracy and constructs a corresponding language of democracy which is well worth studying. In the courage section there are suggestions on how to manage fear as an energy and on the importance of revising beliefs as new lenses on reality. Towards the end of the book there is a checklist of living democracy, qualities which people all over the world are already embodying. Both books also have resources and formats for activating discussions about the vision.

The focus of Jean Shinoda Bolen's book is gathering women to save the world. The first women's movement was the suffragettes, then the women's movement of the 60s and 70s. The new movement, according to Bolen, will be the women's peace movement, which will build on the foundations of the earlier movements. The first Mother's Day dates back to 1870: motherhood is not about patriarchal power, control and domination but rather about love, empathy and nurturing. Patriarchal religion is based on fear, obedience, chauvinism, sacrifice, sin and atonement, and repression of sexuality. There are some telling stories and anecdotes, for instance the difference between boys and girls faced with ethical dilemmas; boys tend to accept the parameters given, while girls will try to escape from the constraints by suggesting further possible options. Bolen quotes Malcolm Gladwell as saying that successful social epidemics are based on the bedrock belief that change is possible and that human beings can radically alter their behaviour. This means proactive, visionary action beginning from a refusal to accept the status quo and the systems that systematically disempower us.

For readers who think that these books may be overstating their arguments, the response is that they provide a timely balance and antidote to the assumption or imposition of patriarchal ways of thinking and acting. Women have not yet seized the opportunity to mobilise for the critical issues facing the planet, mothers aligned with the Mother, but these grassroots movements are growing in strength all the time. Lappe's inspiring book goes further than Bolen's as a handbook for re-visioning social action and transforming thin democracy into living democracy, fear to courage and powerlessness to powerful capacity.

general

Childhood Roots of War

David Lorimer

PARENTING FOR A PEACEFUL WORLD

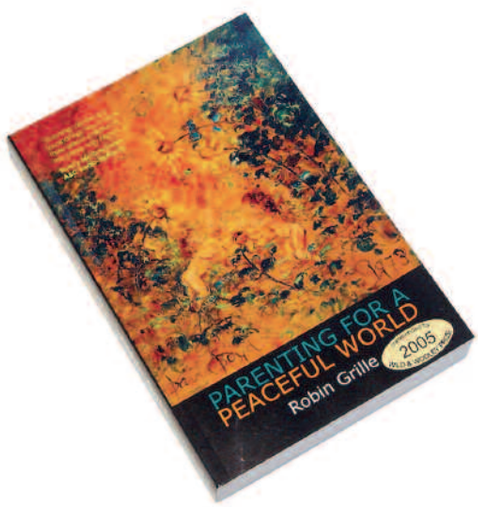
Robin Grille (SMN)

Longueville, 2005, 428 pp., no price given, p/b – ISBN 1 921004 14 2

This extraordinary and far-reaching book will transform your understanding of how differing practices of rearing children impact on social evolution, particularly with respect to violence and war. The title indicates the direction of the argument, namely that more supportive and empathic child-rearing practices will eventually lead to less repressive social structures and a diminution in social violence. The book is divided into seven main parts. The first makes the case for how parenting changes the world, and is followed by history of childhood through the ages. This is then related to the ways in which child-rearing affects particular nations. The book moves on to a discussion of how one moves from authoritarian to authoritative parenting, and explains how emotional development is related to the healthy growth of the brain. Stages of emotional development are described in more detail, and the conclusion asks how we can best raise emotionally healthy children. From this brief outline, it will be apparent that the book has profound implications not only for parents, but also for educators and policymakers.

No reader can fail to be shocked by the history of childhood. The author moves through six modes: the infanticidal, the abandoning, the ambivalent, the intrusive, the socialising and the helping. Children have been sacrificed, mutilated, abused and abandoned. For instance, between 1879 and 1881, 69,000 babies were abandoned in Sicily. In 18th-century Paris about a quarter of babies were dumped and about three-quarters were sent out into the country to wet nurses. The wet nurse gradually mutates into the nanny but most parents of hundred years ago kept their children at a physical as well as emotional distance – the boarding school was symptomatic of this process, even though attitudes have moved on enormously and flogging has been abolished. Child labour exists even in our own times, but at least the practice of swaddling has all but disappeared. It is interesting to read about the influence of Rousseau, whose child-centred attitudes were shocking at the time.

Nowadays, most societies are in a transitional phase between what the author calls the socialising and the helping mode. The socialising mode is based on conformity, obedience and control; many readers will recognise their own experience in this description, which is amplified in explanations of the main tools used - corporal punishment, shaming and manipulation. The helping mode, by contrast, prioritises the emotional development of the child and is



informed by the new literature on emotional intelligence. Patriarchal social structures based on male dominance and female submission, often involving wife-beating, provide the most toxic childhood environment. Similar patterns can also to be found among fundamentalists of various persuasions. There is a strong correlation between sexuality and sin, and an emphasis on corporal punishment with overly defined roles for boys and girls in terms of aggression and submission. Not unnaturally, the emotional development of both sexes is severely compromised. Even more extreme are examples of honour killing of young girls who, it is claimed, have shamed their families. The author gives some chilling examples of the childhoods of dictators such as Stalin, Hitler and Saddam Hussein. If, as he argues, violence is a learned response, then such circumstances provide perfect breeding grounds. This must surely also apply to families from which violent youth crime emerges. Violence is often transgenerational and it is well-nigh impossible to develop an empathic response to other people.

The section on the shaping of personality shows how our early responses can be hardwired into the nervous system, for instance for 'fight' responses in violent leaders and shame-based or fear-based submission in the obedient followers. It turns out that human contact is crucial for the proper development of parts of the brain concerned with the regulation of emotion, so that 'when a child is consistently treated gently and empathically, this produces in the brain a biochemistry that is incompatible with violence.' By implication and on a larger scale, war becomes neurologically impossible. More generally, implicit memories from childhood affect future patterns of relationship and may even be held as body memory.

A long section examines five stages of early childhood emotional development in terms of five corresponding rites of passage: the right to exist, the right, indeed, the right to have support, the right to freedom and the right to love. Each of these is explained in detail, with a corresponding set of positive and negative core beliefs. These can act as a mental checklist for the reader, which is a very revealing process, corresponding as it does to many scripts running as emotional software programs in our personalities.

At a practical level, research is beginning to show the value of parenting support centres and more general education on parenting. A module on the history of childhood would make interesting study material for PSHE or citizenship courses. Governments are beginning to become aware of the importance of emotional development in children, but in many cases the parents will also need help. The author quite rightly asserts that war is not the answer to terrorism, 'because this is a policy that fails to take into account the childhood causes of violence.' Less costly and more effective would be an emotional education programme fostering tolerance and mutual understanding. The author forecasts that as families become less patriarchal and authoritarian and schools become less repressive and coercive, societies will evolve more real democracy and will settle their differences by means other than war. It is an optimistic vision, but one based on much cross-disciplinary research from psychohistory, neuroscience, child psychology and social psychology. As I remarked at the beginning of this review, this is an enormously significant book with profound implications for education, politics and the creation of a truly sustainable world. Interested readers can also consult www.our-emotional-health.com

The Spirit of Barfield as Interior Transforming Agent

Martin Lockley

OWEN BARFIELD: ROMANTICISM COMES OF AGE: A BIOGRAPHY

Simon Blaxland-de Lange

Temple Lodge, 2063, 352 pp., £22.00, h/b - ISBN 1-902636-77-5

For an unassuming man claiming a 'humdrum' existence, Owen Barfield (1898-1997), had extraordinary influence among many who were influential in their own right, including his friends C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, who together with Cecil Harwood and Charles Williams comprised the Oxford literary group, still somewhat famously known as the 'Inklings.'

Barfield modestly suggested to biographer Blaxland-de Lange that his biography was unimportant in comparison with getting his existing studies 'more widely known'… 'to help jog things along in the right evolutionary direction.' Barfield's thinking 'was so far-reachingly radical that it can only be gradually assimilated' by one lacking 'prior preparation.' His thought like that of Rudolf Steiner, whom he called the 'Aristotle of modern times,' requires thoughtful, conscientious study, reflection and practice, not mere reading.

So, avoiding strict chronological biography, Blaxland makes a valiant effort to convey the nuances of Barfield's thought, by first reviewing his many American lectures given between 1964 and 1997, after his retirement, when his thought was mature and refined. Not quite a prophet in his own land, Barfield received widespread recognition in the USA and Canada, where, if not famous like Lewis or Tolkien, he was at least well-known in various academic circles. John Lukacs praised him as 'perhaps the greatest living English thinker of our time' and Blaxland characterises *Unancestral Voice* as Barfield's 'most profound and original contribution to the intellectual ferment of his age.'

The essential message of Barfield's philosophical work is that material nature, which can now be 'experienced as poetry' or metaphor, was formerly 'not a metaphor but an actual experience' [what he often calls 'participation']. 'Investigating the prehistoric period requires a cognitive process not based on the phenomenal world but on direct perception of the noumenal or pre-phenomenal world' which might indeed be the proverbial experience of a 'blooming, buzzing, confusion.' So, 'if you want to investigate the nature and above all the origin of human consciousness you can only do so from within that consciousness. You will get nowhere by … forming biological and physiological theories' on which to base your ideas about consciousness. In short you must access the other's conscious experience. [As suggested by Gebser and Wilber, our archaic, magical and mythical consciousness structures are not lost, but only relegated to the subconscious by the dominant mental structure]. 'The dawn of history represents the incursion of a consciously directed human process into the stream of an unconscious natural one.'

Regarding the book's subtitle - the epithet of Barfield as a true Romantic 'refers to a quality which … stand[s]

against the prevailing trend of scientific reductionism or materialism, against a non-spiritual view of the world' - against the 'dogma that nothing really exists except what is actually or notionally perceptible to the senses.' Such modern superstition [more recently attacked by Wendell Berry in *Life is a Miracle*] fosters ' the mental habit of taking for granted, *for all practical purposes and most theoretical ones*, [original italics], that the human psyche is intrinsically alienated from nature'… Unfortunately this false and potentially dangerous assumption is too often 'accepted as common sense.'

Barfield's profound, original thought is convergent with Rudolf Steiner's radical teaching. Barfield characterised Anthroposophy as 'a systematic treatment of the evolution of consciousness' a view accepted neither by his wife nor by C. S. Lewis, with whom he debated the point in what they called their 'Great War.' Their extensive written exchanges still bewilder scholars. Barfield saw Steiner's insights as a giant stride forward from our present state of separation ('the nadir of non-participation') towards a 'renewed' or final participation with nature. Barfield makes the telling statement that unlike Lewis his position is 'based almost entirely on experience… and hardly at all on believing something it is difficult to believe.' [For this reason Lewis's faith was shaken by his wife's death, whereas because Barfield's faith was about *experience*, and had little to do with what one should believe, he could not imagine it being so shaken].

Barfield, somewhat incredulously, recalled that Lewis 'believed that there was a wall separating the world of imagination from that of objective truth' – whereas Barfield's whole thesis was that the act of knowing is a synthesis of concept and percept which requires the observer's subjective, imaginative thought (concept) to engage with the observed objects of the sensory world (percepts). Famously, Barfield saw Lewis playing with imagination, as separate from knowledge and truth, and said 'he was in love with [imagination]…but I wanted to marry it.' Likewise Barfield was mystified by Lewis saying 'I was not born to be free; I was born to adore and obey,' and by his rigid belief that 'revelation had occurred once and for all…and is finished.' In short, Lewis refused to recognise any significant 'evolution or development of consciousness in the course of human history.'

Put bluntly, Barfield found Lewis's position irresponsible because he dismissed his (and Steiner's) dynamic, liberating, organic thought without even understanding it. On these topics he saw Lewis's position as static creationism – a type of 'Maccabean, ' 'devotional reductionism' in contrast to the 'Nicodemian' humanism he espoused, which allowed a dynamic evolution in the relationship between humans and God. Barfield often referred to a 'residue of unresolved positivism' promulgated by the Descartes-Lyell-Darwin trio, and others. Positivism's shortcomings are seen in Descartes' mind-body split, Lyell's unchanging uniformitarianism, and the 'fantasy' that Darwin's theory of natural selection can be taken as the '*whole* cause of biological development through the ages' (his italics).

Barfield believed that as humans became self-conscious, language and meaning emerged: inspiration became imagination as externally-shackled perception (poetic muse) separated from internal, 'thought'-ful rumination of the 'free' individual. This sea change in human self-consciousness is manifest in the incarnation of God in man 'the Divine Ego, the I AM, with all the moral problems entailed … for each individual soul.' In short, the fall or acquisition of knowledge (concept separating from percept) leads to the moral dilemma of self-conscious individuality, freedom and responsibility.

Elsewhere, in *Unancestral Voice*, a work of 'true inspiration' according to Blaxland, Barfield laments that the dualistic, catholic, body-mind thinking has 'hampered the western philosophical mind' by abolishing spirit (our third component) – the 'interior transforming agent' in the evolution of humanity. This individual human spirit must persist in evolutionary development and be conceived of as a form 'different from the oriental doctrine of reincarnation.' Following Anthroposophy's (Steiner's) notion that the Christ incarnation was an event of great symbolic importance for the meaning of human existence, Barfield offers a 'radical reappraisal of Christian Theology.' Since humans separated from nature (from original, childhood participation to adolescent separation) the only way back to final participation is for us to give something back to nature. This is the challenge of adulthood. This three stage evolution was simply expressed in Richard Keck's three epochs (I: Paleolithic, Goddess harmony, II: Neolithic, patriarchal, warrior adolescence and III: coming mature reintegration with the feminine). In Barfieldian language the evolution is from the 'Theosophia of ancient times [to] the Philosophia of the classical world' to the 'feminine spirit being Anthroposophia.'

Blaxand's warning that Barfield's far-reaching thinking requires 'prior preparation' is apt. Just writing this short review stimulated me to re-read and read anew several titles and seek others for future reference. The assimilation is worth the effort and Blaxand's volume makes a valuable companion to any Barfield library.

Now or Never

Timothy Glazier

MAKING TIME –

Why time seems to pass at different speeds and how to control it

Steve Taylor (SMN)

Icon Books, 2007, 261 pp., £12.99, h/b – ISBN 978 184046826 7

Steve Taylor has written an intriguing and accessible book which uses the mystery of the phenomenon of time as a vehicle for encouraging the pursuit of self-transformation. Time is something that has fascinated thinkers through the ages but today our culture is obsessed and dominated by it as never before and in his introduction Steve sets out how it is possible to become released from its thrall *it's actually possible for us to expand time, to alter our perceptions so that we experience more of it. We don't need to try to cheat the ageing process or extend our lives for as long as possible – it's actually easier, and more beneficial, to expand time from the inside, by changing the way we experience the moment-to-moment reality of our lives…..we'll see that not only is it possible to expand time, but also to transcend it altogether.*

The book starts with a clear analysis of the differing perceptions of time, and the causes of these which he calls his Five Laws of Psychological Time: *time speeds up as we get older - time slows down when we are exposed to new experiences and environments - time passes quickly in states of absorption - time passes slowly in times of non-absorption - time often passes slowly, or stops altogether, in situations where the 'conscious mind' or normal ego is in abeyance.* All familiar experiences but neatly codified and explained with extensive examples from his own workshops, interviews

and personal experience concluding that *…the only way to make sense of these experiences is to think of psychological time as a creation of the ego, which doesn't function outside the ego in the same way that universal time doesn't function outside of gravitational fields.*

Thus the basis of his approach to psychological time is that it is the ego that governs our perceptions of time. This follows up the theme of his well received previous book *The Fall* in which he demonstrated how some 6,000 years ago events, which included the transition from living as a wandering hunter/gatherer to that of a settled farmer, triggered within humanity 'the fall', which he suggests was an *ego explosion* leading to a wide range of consequences, not least a completely transformed perception of time. In a chapter entitled *Time across Cultures* Steve illustrates how primal hunter gatherer peoples have very little sense of ego and perception of time by quoting the work of Edward T Hall from the 1930's. *Hopi and Navajo in Arizona….live in a kind of eternal present…..Hopi language having no word for time, and their verbs have no past, present or future tenses.* Whereas in *Up from Eden,* Ken Wilber says of this change of time perception *with the advent of farming men and women entered an extended world of tense, time and temporal duration, expanding their life and consciousness to include the future.*

Considering other aspects of the phenomenon that do not accord with the conventional view of time, such as *timelessness in science, higher states of consciousness, precognition, premonition and retrocognition* Steve starts to close with how we can make a change *…once you know why something happens, it is possible to control it.* He suggests that we need to find a way of subduing or weakening our normal ego and of *waking up to reality,* giving examples of how it is possible to experience periods of complete release from time, which might occur at moments of crisis or extreme danger, by entering 'the zone' in sport and in states of higher consciousness when *time and space dissolve into an ocean of infinite and eternal consciousness; the boundaries between past, present and future melt into oneness. Time is no longer linear but special.* We no longer feel that time is running away from us, because in reality there is no time, but only *now.*

Through this process of analysis and explanation, Steve leads the reader to the practical steps of controlling the perception of time which include the Buddhist concept of mindfulness, quoting from *Coming to our Senses* by Jon Kabat-Zinn - *you might even find yourself stepping out of the subjective experience of time passing altogether, as you open to the timeless quality of the present moment.* But paramount is his insistence that the most important single thing that we can do to *expand and transcend our sense of time* is to introduce the practice of meditation into our lives which can lead to the condition in which *time is no longer a river, but an ocean.*

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A Multidimensional Future

David Lorimer

TRANSCENDING THE GLOBAL POWER GAME

Armin Risi

Govinda Press, 2004, 444 pp., p/b – ISBN 3 90647 67 2

Subtitled 'hidden agendas, divine intervention and the new earth', this original and stimulating book takes a broad view of both the human condition and history, delving into influential covert forces operating behind the scenes. Importantly, however, it advances a cosmic philosophy based on the author's study during his 18 years spent in Vedic monasteries. This enables him to understand that a multi-dimensional worldview is to be found both in ancient texts and modern knowledge.

The basic teaching is that reality is not limited to physical matter and that there is a oneness beyond the polarity and duality of physical existence. He sees life as an opportunity to manifest love by living in divine consciousness rather than choosing the way of separation by identifying with the illusion of the ego. This task is all the more difficult when our culture bombards us with distractions so that we have little time or energy left for our inner lives. The author asks in what state of being one can transcend the illusory sense of separation and realise oneself as simultaneously individual one. Existentially, he claims, living in love means experiencing harmony with the Absolute.

From this philosophical understanding, Risi examines the role of secret societies in world history, a highlighting the dangers of what he calls 'occult monism' prevalent in power seeking secret societies. The imposed unity of A New World Order will be achieved by the illuminated getting into a position of directing all those who are not illuminated. Hence the drive for full power by people who think they have gone beyond good and evil, so that any means is legitimate in pursuit of this end. There is a school of thought that believes that the war on terror is part of a larger plan to create sufficient chaos so that there will be a widespread demand for an authoritarian world state in the name of international security. This is a far cry from the more democratic and self organising model of unity in diversity, and represents the ultimate triumph of patriarchal manipulation. Groups such as the Skull and Bones in the US (both Bush presidents are members) perpetuate the power of male dominated elites and key moneyed families.

How will all this play out? We cannot know in advance, but there are many apocalyptic and trans-formational scenarios around, including the putative role of UFOs and extraterrestrial intelligences, not to mention the way in which US foreign policy is currently informed by the expectation of Armageddon. The key question is whether fear or love will prevail. Technologies of psychological manipulation. and implant microchips are well advanced, along with unprecedented surveillance and the compilation of intrusive databases in the name of national security. All of this plays on fear and is the polar opposite of the embodiment of love required for real social and planetary transformation.

In this connection, the book contains an inspiring but also chilling prophecy attributed to Jehan de Vezelay (1041-1119). After many trials and tribulations, 'men will know that all living entities are carriers of Light, all of them being creatures deserving equal respect.' In these exhilarating but dangerous times, we need to be as well informed as possible but also remained true to the principles of love, wisdom and truth. This book will provide readers with a rather different perspective on our current situation, but one which will in all probability resonate with their spiritual aspirations.