



books in brief

David Lorimer

SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Science & Certainty

by John T O Kirk

CSIRO Publishing 2008, 262 pp., £27.50, p/b.

A comprehensive account of what science believes about the origins of the cosmos, the solar system and the biosphere. The nature of physical reality is described as is the physical basis of conscious reality. The book moves on to an extensive consideration of the relationship between science and environmental concern, with a chapter on the Gaia hypothesis. The special quality of the book is that arguments for and against various positions are put forward, for instance about the relationship between mind and brain. Interestingly, and unusually, the author concludes that dualism provides the best account, arguing that materialism does not suggest an explanatory mechanism. The concluding chapter looks at the overarching belief systems, especially theism and atheism, contending that neither can be falsified by science, nor does either position get any special deal from science. Overall, an admirably balanced discussion.

Relativity. A Very Short Introduction

by Russell Stannard

Oxford University Press 2008, 114 pp., £7.99, p/b.

Russell Stannard is emeritus professor of physics and the Open University, and well-known for his work on science and religion as well as introductions to science for children. In this book he provides a vivid account of special and general relativity, exploring the paradoxes and implications in a highly readable form.

The Cambridge History of Science

by Theodore M Porter & Dorothy Ross (eds)

Cambridge University Press 2003, 734 pp., £100, h/b.

Volume 7 - the modern social sciences. This is, as one might expect, a magisterial achievement of vast scope. The 43 chapters are divided into four parts, and cover every conceivable historical and disciplinary area. There are sections on each of the main disciplines in Western Europe and North America since 1880, but also a whole section of the internationalisation of the social sciences. For instance, there are chapters on psychology in Russia and Central and Eastern Europe, sociology in Egypt and Morocco and the social sciences in Africa, India, China and Japan. In the last part, there are chapters on management and accounting, social welfare, psychologism, gender, race and cultural relativism. A pervasive influence which is also the subject of an individual chapter is that of the physical sciences on the social sciences. In particular, there is a fascinating discussion of cause, teleology and method, which discusses the emergence of positivism and a tendency to reduce human beings to functions, denying purpose, intentionality and free will. This is a corollary of the materialism and mechanistic philosophy that has become so predominant.

Notes from the Holocene

by Dorion Sagan

Chelsea Green Publishing Company 2007, 226 pp.,

\$14.95, p/b.

A remarkable scientific *tour d'horizon* mixing science and speculation and addressing what he calls 12 mysteries, such as why life exists, why we drink water, the question of the centrality

of human beings, and the nature of the Earth as an organism and even that of ultimate reality. He uses broad headings of earth, water, air and fire as a context and ranges widely across scientific and cosmological questions. The Gaia hypothesis plays a central role (Sagan is the son of Lynn Margulis and is also a sleight-of-hand magician) and humour is never far away. Indeed, the book ends with the reflection on how we always manage to finish up with single socks in the drawer. This is popular science at its best.

The Undercover Scientist

by Peter J. Bently

Random House Publishing Group Ltd 2008, 247 pp.,

£12.99, p/b.

An unusually structured book investigating the mishaps of everyday life. It reads like a series of disasters any of which could happen to people on a difficult day, but of course not all together! Starting with sleeping through the alarm and slipping on the bathroom floor as well as cutting oneself while shaving, the scenario moves on to filling your car with petrol rather than diesel, crashing your hard disk and scratching your CDs. Peter Bently explains the science behind all these events and, where he can, gives advice about what to do. An entertaining and instructive book that brings science alive in an everyday context.

The Music of Life - Biology beyond Genes

by Denis Noble

Oxford University Press 2006, 153 pp., £7.99, p/b.

Using the musical metaphor of his title, Denis Noble explains the new field of systems biology as a corrective to the currently dominant reductionist approach in molecular biology. With its emphasis on interaction and feedback between gene, cell, organ, system, body and environment, this approach puts the organism together again. The different chapters deal with these various levels, each with its own metaphor. Surprisingly, the work of scientists such as Brian Goodwin and Stuart Kauffman is not referenced, even though they have been putting forward similar arguments for the last 15 years. However, it is encouraging to see such thinking so elegantly expressed and coming to the fore.

The Oxford Book of Modern Science Writing

by Richard Dawkins (ed)

Oxford University Press 2008, 419 pp., £20.00, h/b.

An excellent collection featuring over 80 scientists and arranged in four parts: what scientists study, who scientists are, what scientists think, and what scientists delight in. There is an emphasis on creativity and imagination as well as literary style. It was an editorial decision that there are no extracts from Richard Dawkins himself, but he provides an (occasionally outspoken) introductory commentary on all the pieces, which help bring them to life. Earlier writers include Sir D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington (it is an editorial anomaly that the titles of many more modern writers like Sir Fred Hoyle, Martin Rees (Lord Rees of Ludlow) and Sir Roger Penrose are not indicated - nor in fact is that of D'Arcy Wentworth Thomson). Very few women are represented - there is an extract from Rachel Carson but nothing from Barbara McClintock or Marie Curie. A very wide range of writers and topics is featured, and the extracts are generally brief enough to be read in shorter snippets, which makes it an ideal book to dip into and perhaps to place in guest bedrooms. The book as a whole is a very impressive anthology and one that all science enthusiasts will want to own.

Galaxies**by John Gribbin***Oxford University Press 2008, 121 pp., £6.99.*

John Gribbin is one of our best-known science writers and the perfect choice to write this very short introduction on galaxies. He describes the history and development of research in this field over the last hundred years, bringing the reader right up-to-date with the latest thinking. An ideal entry point to this field.

MEDICINE/HEALTH**Spirit, Science & Health****by Thomas G Plante and Carl E Thoresen (eds)***Praeger Publishers 2007, 230 pp., h/b.*

An edited volume in this emerging field of spirituality and health, subtitled 'how the spiritual mind fuels physical wellness.' The 14 chapters are divided into five parts and cover a wide range of topics such as prayer, learning to be spiritual (the relationship between spiritual modelling, and spiritual practice and belief), meditation (including an essay with member Carol Lee Flinders), compassion and health, spirituality and health in adolescence, spirituality and cancer, and spiritual issues at the end of life. The appearance of the book is part of a change in the conception of health from a disease model to a health promotion model in which lifestyle habits play a central role. The contents help identify the role of spirituality in relation to other health-promoting psychosocial influences and will be of interest to clinicians and psychologists alike.

Altruism & Health - perspectives from empirical research**by Stephen G Post (ed)***Oxford University Press 2007, 441 pp., h/b.*

This volume is divided into four parts, beginning with research on volunteering and health, moving on to the contribution of altruistic and emotions to health, evolutionary models of altruism and health, and finally altruism, health and religion. The 23 chapters are wide ranging in their outlook and discipline, including research in biology, psychiatry, psychology, epidemiology and public health. The indication from much of this research is that unselfish individuals find life more meaningful and are generally happier and experience better mental health. There is also a danger, however, that one can become stressed as a result of one's altruism, in which case the health benefits will be negative. Of course, altruists do not have health as an immediate goal but it is rather a by-product of an energetic and generous life. For animal lovers, it is encouraging to know that there are physical and mental health benefits associated with pet companionship and the human-animal bond, although in this area, as in many others, much such remains to be done.

The Triple Process Remedy**by The Process Centre (William Sun)***The Process Centre Ltd 2008, 218 pp., £59.50, p/b.*

The book corresponding to the presentation made at the annual meeting. It presents a new philosophy of illnesses involving stress, anxiety and depression. After a review of contemporary theories and treatments of anxiety disorders, the authors present a process philosophy which draws on both Eastern and Western sources. They explain how this can be applied to human health, using the principles of wholeness, equilibrium and fluidity. They discuss the limitations of modern medical theories and flaws in the theoretical understanding and practical treatment of anxiety disorders. They then present the triple process remedy, which is based on natural process, nurtural process and nutritional process. The book finishes with some case studies. It will be of great interest to practitioners with an interest in psychosomatic disorders and the elaboration of a new philosophy of medicine. The analysis makes a great deal of sense and provides a promising basis for moving forward on both practical and theoretical fronts. See www.theprocesscentre.co.uk

The History of Medicine. A Very Short Introduction**by William Bynum***Oxford University Press 2008, 169 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

William Bynum is one of the best-known figures in the field of the history of medicine and as such ideally placed to write this book. As one might expect, the book concentrates mainly on the history of Western medicine, but it is arranged in a very interesting fashion. Five kinds of medicine are characterised and examined: medicine at the bedside, in the library, in the hospital, in the community and in the laboratory. This enables the author to organise a vast amount of material into a readable format, and one which shows how different types of medicine have developed. The final chapter examines the role of medicine in the modern world, commenting on its prospects and limitations.

PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION**The Ascent of Man****by Eleanor C Merry***Floris Books 2008, 277 pp., £14.99, p/b.*

Reprint of a classic work first published in 1944 which gives a cross-cultural overview of the spiritual evolution of humanity, covering all the major civilisations down to our own time, using a broadly Steinerian view. In the 19th century she covers Blake, Goethe and Schelling as harbingers of a deeper spiritual understanding eclipsed by modern materialistic culture which knows nothing of the depths of human consciousness and suffers a profound identity disorientation. However, a spiritual awakening is now taking place, which will lead to a deeper understanding and heightened sense of responsibility.

The Golden Thread**by Joscelyn Godwin (SMN)***Quest Books 2007, 200 pp., \$16.95, p/b.*

Originally written as a series of fourteen scholarly articles for Lapis, a magazine associated with the Open Centre in New York, this is a highly accessible and readable account of the history of Western esotericism, which includes the Hermetic tradition, the Orphic mysteries, Pythagoras, Plato, negative theology, mediaeval cathedrals, the Renaissance, alchemy and influence from the East. With its emphasis on gnosis, it will be of particular interest to readers, who may well be familiar with some areas but not others. There is an interesting discussion about the correlation between monotheism and dogmatism in the sense of claiming a monopoly of truth, which continues to have such disastrous consequences. The underlying insight is that there is 'one reality behind and beyond all things, to which the human being is mysteriously connected.' It is amazing to learn that in the period from the 1180 to 1270, 80 cathedrals and nearly 500 abbeys were built in France alone. In the final chapter, the author observes that the exoteric world is still stuck in the dichotomy that Theosophy sought to resolve, namely the opposition of materialistic science to dogmatic religion. An esoteric perspective such as advanced in this book provides an intellectually satisfying resolution.

The Living God and Our Living Psyche**by Ann Belford Ulanov and Alvin Dueck***William Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2008, 111 pp., £8.99, p/b.*

This book asks what Christians can learn from Carl Jung. Ann Ulanov is a professor of psychiatry and religion and Alvin Dueck holds the chair for the integration of psychology and theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He provides a prologue and epilogue to three essays by Ulanov on Christian fear of the psyche, the shadow and the feminine, and the question of God-images in relation to faith. Jung's work is seen as a pastoral response to the rise of secularism and an attempt to rescue religion from the tentacles of modern scepticism. He creates room for spirituality and puts forward a radical critique of modernity. The discussion on symbols and dogma is of particular interest, since the way of knowing implied in symbols takes us beyond the literalism of dogma into an area of unknowing. A worthwhile read for those interested in the relationship of Jungian psychology and Christianity.

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Science and Religion**by Thomas Dixon***Oxford University Press 2008, 150 pp., £7.99.*

An original approach to the subject in which much has already been written both at the general and specialist level. As pointed out in the preface, many books try to persuade the reader of the plausibility or implausibility of religion in relation to science. Dixon seeks to dig deeper into the philosophy of science in order to understand both history and epistemology. He discusses the politics of knowledge and arguments for and against realism. One chapter examines the question of whether God acts in nature, while two chapters are devoted to the pollution, creationism and intelligent design. The final chapter examines issues related to mind and morality, and there is a good bibliography of further reading. A very useful introduction to the issues.

Sivananda Buried Yoga**by Yogi Manmoyanand***O Books 2008, 308 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

An autobiographical account of the author's spiritual development - what comes through most strongly is a passion for truth and genuine spiritual discovery which cannot be fobbed off with anything less than authenticity. The author criticises the purely physical approach to yoga in the West, which bypasses true spiritual awareness and takes a business based approach. The reader will find clear explanations of traditional techniques in a readable form that brings the experience alive.

Collingwood and the Crisis of Western Civilisation**by Richard Murphy***Imprint Academic 2008, 296 pp., £30.00, h/b.*

R. G. Collingwood was a significant Oxford philosopher of history, whose work has been enjoying a recent revival. This book considers his contributions to an analysis of the crisis of Western civilisation with a special emphasis on art, which Collingwood regards as central both in diagnosing the crisis and providing an antidote for it. Art is involved in the process of self and world creation, creating the world by becoming conscious of it. Collingwood builds upon the romanticism of John Ruskin as well as the emergence of dialectical and historical philosophy (Ortega y Gasset and Nietzsche are discussed in some detail). Civilisation can then be seen as an achievement involving increasing civility. Although primarily written for scholars, the general reader can benefit from this book with its wide frame of reference.

The Altruism Reader**by Thomas Jay Oord (ed)***Templeton Foundation Press 2008, 374 pp., \$39.95, p/b.*

The Templeton Foundation has been active in promoting the study of unlimited love as an aspect of spiritual reality. This wide ranging reader begins by defining love in its various forms (there is a very interesting contrast between agape and eros). It then has sections on ancient and contemporary religious writings on love, the biology of altruism and manifestations of altruism in the social sciences. Each section contains a short introduction by the editor, together with notes and references. An important contribution to the emerging scholarship of love and altruism.

Dis-Enclosure**by Jean-Luc Nancy***Fordham University Press 2008, 190 pp., £13.95, p/b.*

Subtitled 'the deconstruction of Christianity', this is a technical and demanding series of essays which nevertheless repays close attention. Translated from French, the reader can engage with the subtle precision of thought for which some French philosophy is renowned, with some original French terms in parentheses. Nancy agrees with thinkers who regard Christianity as inseparable from the West, adding that 'any analysis that pretends to find a deviation of the modern world from Christian reference forgets or denies that the modern world is itself the unfolding of Christianity.' Indeed, Christianity can be regarded as 'the religion that provided the exit from religion.' This is illustrated by considering two central tenets of Christianity, namely faith and sin. The act of faith is seen as one of intentionality, while sin has receded in favour of love and hope except in hardline fundamentalism.

The Essential Mary Midgley (SMN)**edited by David Midgley***Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group 2005, 413 pp.*

Mary Midgley's writings will be well known to many readers, but few will have ranged across the full spectrum of her writings. She has challenged many scientific and moral orthodoxies in her time, as also indicated in the foreword by James Lovelock. She champions a holistic and systems thinking approach and has recently been a leading proponent of the Gaia hypothesis. The various sections examine the roots of human nature, issues in moral philosophy, the myths of science the relationship of reason to imagination. The final section explains Gaian thinking. The value of Mary's thinking is that she questions the assumptions and investigates what she calls 'philosophical plumbing' and the role of different ideas in helping map our world. She also has an intensely practical concern, relating her thinking to the major issues of our time. David provides contextual introductions to each set of extracts, which helps guide the reader through the arguments. Having the whole of Mary's thinking summarised in one volume is enormously valuable, enabling the reader to access the essence of her approach.

Vladimir Soloviev, Russian Mystic**by Paul M. Allen***Lindisfarne Books 1978, 331 pp., £20.00, p/b.*

Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) is not well-known in this country, but this book provides an illuminating introduction to his life and thought by an author familiar with the work of Rudolf Steiner. It is divided into representative seven-year periods, which can form an archetypal pattern of human development. The unfolding of Soloviev's mystical capacities was precocious, and the encounter with Sophia-Wisdom is central to his life, as it was with Bruno and Boehme. He passed through a stage of militant atheism, but this made his spiritual life all the stronger as it evolved. He had a close friendship with Dostoevsky, who advised him to travel to London. He was also active politically, especially after the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881. He felt that Alexander's successor had a chance to rise above the politics of retribution and embody the force of Christ's forgiveness. However, this was a bridge too far for the new Czar and his reaction arguably hastened eventual revolution. Soloviev's philosophy addresses the very purpose and structure of human life, taking further the mystical Christianity of Schelling that the message of Christ is an impulse towards resurrection in the broadest sense. Soloviev himself embodied the spirit and was renowned for his kindness and consideration. The biography makes it clear that he literally wore himself out with his premature death at the age of 47, but his words live on and will surely resonate with any sensitive reader whose spiritual life will at least in part be mirrored in the experience of Soloviev.

The Way Things Are**by Lama Ole Nydahl***O Books 2008, 191 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

Subtitled 'a living approach to Buddhism for today's world', this book is an explanation of the diamond way as taught by the Karma Kagyu the lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. It recounts the story of the Buddha's life and explains the three ways in which Buddhist teachings can be guide to life. Using the structure of view, meditation and action, various levels of spiritual practice are described and, towards the end, there is a series of meditations, including a special one given by the 16th Karmapa. The clarity of the book results from 40 years of studying and teaching.

Pico della Mirandola**by M V Dougherty (ed)***Cambridge University Press 2008, 219 pp., h/b.*

Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) is one of the key figures in the Renaissance, famous for his Oration, which is in fact the introduction to a much longer work - his statement of 900 theses, 13 of which were selected by the Church as potentially heretical. Considering the shortness of his life, Pico's output and achievement is extraordinary. In those days, one could start

studying at university at the age of 14, and it is interesting to learn that his philosophical beginnings were more Aristotelian than Platonic. At the age of 23 he published his 900 theses, and was hoping to sponsor a conference to have them debated, but this was cancelled by the Pope. One essay in this collection cites and discusses the 13 heretical theses, which makes strange reading for the modern mind. Two of the most interesting essays are concerned with his views on magic and astrology, and his epistemology in the pursuit of universal knowledge.

Handbook for the Spirit

by **Richard Carlson & Benjamin Shield**

New World Library 1990, 199 pp., \$14.95, p/b.

I'm not sure how this book has taken so long to arrive, but it contains reflections from some of the planet's leading religious thinkers on their personal relationship with God or ultimate reality. These include the Dalai Lama, Matthew Fox, Riane Eisler, Huston Smith, Thich Nhat Hanh and Andrew Harvey. Some of the contributions are more personal than others, but each gives a window into the spiritual life of the writer. Marianne Williamson reminds us that 'without the conscious connection to love, life is beset with fear.' The Dalai Lama reminds us that the essence of religion is love, compassion and tolerance, in spite of appearances to the contrary. As the chapters are relatively short, the book lends itself to a series of daily readings.

PSYCHOLOGY/PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Soul Companions

by **Karen Sawyer**

O Books 2008, 474 pp., £14.99.

A rich collection of accounts of modern spiritual teachers and ways in which they are in touch with inner guides of various kinds. The book is arranged around a number of themes such as synchronicities, dreams, journeys and visions, healing, elemental beings, angels and ancestors. Each section has an introduction by the author, who spent two years travelling to see these people. The result gives a fascinating insight into different forms of spiritual guidance and depicts a very different world involving multiple layers of intelligence. I have not come across many of the people quoted and it was interesting to be introduced to some new teachers. Readers will find themselves more drawn to those who resonate with their own path.

Fearproof Your Life

by **Joseph Bailey**

Conari Press 2007, 171 pp., \$17.95, h/b.

A timely book examining the pervasive influence of fear in modern life. Fear has always been with us, but its focus has naturally evolved and the scope for large-scale psychological manipulation has never been greater given modern communications systems. The BBC series *The Power of Nightmares* analysed the political implications while we all have a sense of the changed atmosphere after 9-11 and the racking up of the war on terror. Bailey proposes a model of fear addiction on the basis of his own experience. His core insight is that we can overcome fear through transformation of our sense of identity from ego to 'true self' by releasing our illusory sense of separateness. The analysis has much in common with the fear and love loops developed in the International Futures Forum, showing how there is a transition or turning point enabling the individual to move from a negative to a positive cycle of reinforcement. In practice there will be an ebb and flow as we gradually come to grips with our inner patterns, but the book contains a lot of practical advice and helpful summaries at the end of each chapter.

Amazing Grace

by **David Wolfe & Nick Good**

North Atlantic Books 2008, 211 pp., \$16.95, p/b.

I don't imagine that many readers are familiar with the original story of *Amazing Grace* involving Capt Newton and his cargo of slaves bound for America. Their resolute singing during a

catastrophic storm led the captain to set them free and devote the rest of his life to others. It is an example of what the authors called *Soul Power*, which emerges when we are fully aligned with our higher calling. To this end, they explain the seven principles of Huna, with grace at the beginning and forgiveness at the end. The keys are feelings manifest in attitude, attention, and intention formulated as vision, plan and action. Goals have to be written down and constantly reviewed. Inertia must be overcome. The authors do not underestimate the enormity of the challenges facing us with the power of vested interests as they attempt to impose their so-called New World Order. However, the power of love is ultimately stronger than the love of power. The vision and tools contained in this book are a potent impetus towards transformation. See www.davidwolfe.com and www.successultra.com

The Code

by **Tony Burroughs**

Weiser Publications 2008, 208 pp., \$14.95, p/b.

A powerful book setting out 10 intentions for a better world: support life, seek truth, set your course, simplify, stay positive, synchronise, serve others, shine your light, share your vision, synergise. These are summarised in a code at the beginning of the book, which can be said daily. The great thing about it is that the intent is universal and can apply to people from any spiritual background. It developed from 'Intenders Circles' and some inspiring visions are expressed in the book. The code itself can be downloaded from www.intenders.com/TheCode - it is tools such as these that we need to help create a new world.

The Fundamentalist Mind

by **Stephen Larsen**

Quest Books 2007, 248 pp., \$24.95, p/b.

Subtitled 'how polarised thinking imperils of us all' this is an important book addressing a key social, political and religious theme of our time. The theme is addressed at a number of levels, including the neurobiology of belief, the psychology of authority and ritual, dualism and millennialism in the history of Christianity and the nature of the Islamic as well as secular fundamentalism. The danger is that these levels reinforce each other to produce an intensification of fundamentalism. The loving God is also an angry God who both saves and condemns people according to whether you are inside or outside the group. There is a very useful analysis of the basic patterns of fundamentalist thought, which includes dualistic mythology, literalistic thinking, religious and ethnic chauvinism, xenophobia, sexism, and fear and rejection of science and secularism. As readers will know, the mythic template of fundamentalism is present everywhere, including science, medicine, psychotherapy, the new age and scepticism. The author traces his own spiritual development and provides a five-minute fundamentalist exercise for the reader. His last chapter proposes the emergence of a natural religion with inspirations from Emerson and Swedenborg. It is not really a canon of beliefs, but rather a realisation that spiritual transformation is a lifelong process.

FUTURE STUDIES/ ECONOMICS/ECOLOGY

Utopia. The Potential and Prospect of the Human Condition

by **George Kateb (ed)**

Transaction Publishers 1971, 160 pp., p/b.

It is strange to reprint a book after 37 years without any update or new introduction. However, the question of Utopia is of perennial interest and some of the contributors to this volume are very well known: Margaret Mead, B. F. Skinner, Ralf Dahrendorf and Zbigniew Brzezinski - later President Carter's defence secretary and the architect of luring the Soviet Union into Afghanistan. The contrast between Mead and the behaviourist Skinner is striking, and his ideology of control and manipulation still informs the thinking of some people trying to

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bring about the New World Order. Brzezinski's essay on America in the Technetronic Age (technology and electronics) contains many prescient of insights about the power of communications and technology, for instance that time will become a rare commodity for the activist elite since, as speed expands, time contracts and pressures on the elite increase. This is only too evident at top levels of management. There is generally more optimism about the beneficial effects of technology and little awareness of the impending ecological challenges, as one might expect. It would be interesting to revisit these themes with some of the authors who are still alive and obtain their reflections nearly 40 years on.

Sustainability, Consciousness and Climate Change by Steve Charter (SMN)

Steve Charter 2007, 87 pp., no price given, p/b.

A fascinating interdisciplinary exploration involving the theoretical consideration of a highly practical problem, namely how human beings can address climate change. Although the book represents work in progress, it places the emphasis firmly on the functioning of human consciousness. Chapters explore sustainability, perception and cognition, the relationship between consciousness, psychology and sustainability, the meaning of the crisis of consciousness and the need to develop what he calls a holistic view of the holistic views. For a culture so focused on the outer, it is hard to take in the importance of consciousness as a shaper of action. However, this is exactly what we need to do - realise that our present thoughts and intentions create the future. The book also proposes the creation of a centre and a series of activities to explore and further the thesis. A timely and significant contribution. Steve can be contacted at steve@sc2.org.uk

The Green Imperative edited by Lorna Howarth, Satish Kumar and Sophie Poklewski Koziell

Green Books Ltd 2008, 158 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This volume celebrates 40 years of Resurgence magazine and invites about 30 of its leading contributors to tell the story of their involvement in the field over this period. Readers will readily recognise names like Fritjof Capra, James Lovelock, Jonathon Porritt, Anita Roddick and Deepak Chopra. They focus on the issues which they are well-known (although Fritjof discusses his new work on the Leonardo) and give pointers towards the future. Most are sanguine about the challenges we face, with a residual optimism arising from past experience and hope for the future. The scope of the book means that virtually all our major challenges are outlined.

Be the Change by Trenna Cormack (ed)

Love Books 2007, 297 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Many readers will be familiar with the Be the Change conferences which have taken place in London over the last few years. This book is a series of interviews with some of the key figures who have taken part and explains how they became involved in particular issues. The main message of the book is that we too can make a difference; we need vision, courage and determination. Some names are well-known, like Jonathan Porritt, Satish Kumar and Vandana Shiva, is just as important are the less well-known people and up and coming figures like Craig Kielburger, who founded Free the Children when he was only 12. His amazing story is recounted here, and I passed it on to my daughter who is the same age. There are also website references to follow particular initiatives.

Climate Change 2007 edited by Martin Parry, Osvaldo Canziani, Jean Palutikof, Paul van der Linden & Clair Hanson

Cambridge University Press 2007, 976 pp., £45.00, p/b.

The second working IPCC group report on impact, adaptation and vulnerability, which is a companion volume to the one reviewed in the last issue. It follows a similar structure, with a 20 page summary of the policymakers, a technical summary of some 50 pages and an in-depth analysis covering all continents

of a further 800 pages. Observational evidence from all continents shows that many natural systems are being affected by regional climate changes, particularly temperature increases. All kinds of habitats and ecosystems are impacted, with a consequent effect on health. Ice melt in the Arctic is particularly clear, with its economic side effect of the opening up of navigable northern sea routes. Adaptation has been limited up until now but will need to become more extensive even to cope with emissions already in the pipeline. Moreover, many impacts can be reduced by mitigation, but this in turn depends upon political will. There is an interesting box on the effects of global warming on viticulture. For instance, the number of days of mean daily temperature above 10°C has increased from 170 around 1970 to 210 now. This has resulted in an increase of potential alcohol levels of nearly 2% over the same period. By the same token, southern areas of France are likely to come under increasing heat stress as in 2003. It is no exaggeration to say that these publications are the encyclopaedia of the topic, drawing as they do on the work of several hundred scientists from all over the world.

In Bed with Madness by Yannis Andricopoulos

Imprint Academic 2008, 191 pp., £8.95, p/b.

The first volume of a trilogy offering a radical critique of modern culture and proposing a new form of ancient Greek wisdom for our time. As the title suggests, this volume explains what the author understands by modern madness (there is a resonance of Erich Fromm here) whereby we suppose that real change can be achieved by egotistical, disconnected and self-seeking individuals operating within a system based on greed and imposing considerable stresses on individuals and families. The challenge is a spiritual and cultural one to which ancient Greek notions of justice can contribute. Justice, he rightly asserts, is the best shield against terrorism. Allied with justice are the principles of balance, proportion and symmetry which we so conspicuously lack. He argues that the Greek emphasis was on 'character rather than personalities, substance rather than image, and doing rather than having, creating rather than consuming and becoming rather than being.'

The Greek Inheritance by Yannis Andricopoulos

Imprint Academic 2008, 244 pp., £8.95, p/b.

The second volume, outlining a vision of ancient Greek wisdom for the digital era, a culture of joy rather than faith or profit. The first part describes the elements of Greek culture including justice, balance, honour and beauty. The second criticises theocracy and plutocracy, reaffirming the centrality of the liberating Greek values described above. He likens modern Gnostics with their counterparts in history, adding that for the mystic 'the purpose of life is the spiritualisation of matter, the full identification with the divine, the blending with the void'. An erudite and provocative book.

The Future of the Past by Yannis Andricopoulos

Imprint Academic 2008, 183 pp., £8.95, p/b.

Concluding his three-volume work and continuing his critique of modern culture in the light of ancient Greek values, the author reaffirms the themes of justice and the true fulfilment of the human being. We do not lack intelligence, but rather 'willingness to see the right and the good and act accordingly', a point immediately reinforced by a quotation from Demosthenes. Meaning is ultimately more important than consumer satisfaction, which itself needs to be refined towards the 'education of desire.' These books are ultimately hopeful and help open up a new dialogue that potentially expands our human capacity.

Self and Society by William Irwin Thompson

Imprint Academic 2004, 95 pp., £8.95, p/b.

A series of studies in the evolution of culture and consciousness. Thompson sees the emergence of complex dynamical systems as the foundation of a new planetary culture and shows how literature and mathematics have formed our

mentalities over time. Some of the individual essays cover the evolution of the afterlife, the role of the city in the evolution of consciousness and the myth of American democracy, as well as the danger of becoming what we hate in the global war against terrorism. An erudite and stimulating collection.

The War on Bugs

by Will Allen

Chelsea Green Publishing Company 2008, 268 pp., \$35, p/b.

An extraordinary book of considerable historical sweep and erudition. The author has been farming organically for over 35 years and is also a professional anthropologist. He has undertaken a vast amount of research to produce this book, which explains the history of American agriculture over the last 200 years. It is the story of the emerging dominance of the chemical approach involving fertilisers and pesticides designed to kill insects, but which also target the micro-organisms and earthworms that are so important for soil life. A special feature of the book is the reproduction throughout the text of fertiliser and pesticide advertisements going well back into the 19th century. These further demonstrate the influence of chemical companies on agricultural publications. As readers will know, the patterns of land holdings have changed completely, so that more than 50% of US land is now leased from absentee landlords including insurance corporations and chemical producers. In spite of all rural resistance, the march of chemical agriculture has been relentless, although there has always been an alternative philosophy embodied in the organic approach. For anyone who wants to understand the history of modern agriculture, this is essential reading.

Digital Dharma

by Steven Vedro

Quest Books 2007, 223 pp., \$16.95.

An interesting book linking the Infosphere with spiritual development. The existence of our web of electronic connectivity is an opportunity for conscious reflection on the deeper truth of our being involving an expansion of what he calls teleconsciousness. Using the chakra system as a metaphor, he maps the psychological onto communications technology, suggesting there is a related Dharma at every level. For instance, the third level of personal autonomy is linked with broadcast radio and sending a clear signal of self. The highest level represents the divine connection illustrated in pervasive computing and what he calls full spectrum living involving 'downloading from the abundance.' It is a stimulating journey with a corresponding practical exercises. One eye-catching box relates the conversation between a rep and the customer who is trying to download a new love file, but finds it sabotaged by other programmes such as grudge.exe, which has to be cleared before installation can proceed...

Sick Planet

by Stan Cox

Pluto Press 2008, 219 pp., £14.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'corporate food and medicine', this important book brings home the systemic connections between agriculture, pharmaceutical drugs and health. At a time when more than 1.1 billion people are overweight, it should be obvious that the current food system is creating health problems which the same companies then seeks to address, making money on both counts. This connection is very evident in The China Study, which I reviewed two years ago. China is example of a country that is making the nutritional transition which will result in an increasing prevalence of the diseases of civilisation. Cox documents the considerable growth of the health-care industry in the United States over the last 15 years. In addition to the factors already mentioned, he shows how many new conditions have been invented ('restless legs' is an example) for which drug treatments are subsequently developed and GPs systematically targeted. Good for the shareholders, but not for their health.

His wider argument is that the very nature of capitalism with its relentless competitive growth is bound to lead to ecological degradation (e.g. pollution of groundwater in India). Moreover, the share of net farm income has declined in inverse relationship to the rise in income from food manufacturers and marketers. In India, the results of inward investment increase

overall inequality, create brown clouds of pollution leading to respiratory diseases and help accelerate global warming. It is paradoxical to suppose that health problems created by consumption can be resolved by further consumption. In the end, the dilemma becomes political impossibility versus biological impossibility. How can one square basic human needs with infinite human wants? Cox writes that 'trying to hold a capitalist economy together without growth would be like trying to hold the solar system together without gravity.' He does not propose any easy solutions but his diagnosis is compelling and well worth reflecting on.

The Enemies of Progress

by Austin Williams

Imprint Academic 2008, 156 pp., £8.95, p/b.

This polemical tract is based on the premise that sustainability is a pernicious and corrosive doctrine that undermines progressive Enlightenment thinking with its emphasis on pessimism and limitations. For Austin, progress consists of overcoming natural barriers rather than recognising any inherent limitations to human development that might be imposed by the very nature of the planet and its resources. Many environmentalists such as Jonathan Porritt have in fact realised the drawbacks of emphasising the doomsday scenario, and are now working in whatever positive ways can be found. However, it would be foolish to ignore the collective impact of human consumption and numbers on the planet, and we should be asking ourselves if our ways of thinking have contributed towards this. It is undeniable that an American standard of living in China and India would require several planets and that current commodity prices are at least in part an indication of tight supply and increasing demand. Human beings can be both creative and destructive and so it is naïve for the author to propose that more people are a good thing because they will bring innovation and imagination to our future. Many readers will find the book infuriating, but it does serve as a corrective to unthinking acceptance of green arguments.

EDUCATION

Growing Up in Trust

by Justine Mol

O Books 2008, 80 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Based on the principles of non-violent communication, this book proposes a different way of bringing up children beyond the model of manipulation through reward and punishment. It will have immediate relevance to anyone with children, as it will stimulate questioning about the way in which we interact. We all want the best for our children and ourselves, but the way we go about it can be counter-productive. The author illustrates her thesis with a number of stories which will have recognisable features. It is all too easy not to take care of ourselves and to become frazzled with our children, so taking care of ourselves is actually important on both counts. This compassionate and wise book addresses the underlying needs of both parents and children.

GENERAL

Naked Chocolate

by David Wolfe & Shazzie

Maul Brothers Publishing 2005, 248 pp., \$24.95, p/b.

A rather different book from David Wolfe, whose *Amazing Grace* is reviewed above. The connection is chocolate, which to some may seem a peculiar adjunct to a raw food diet. The book contains everything a reader might like to know about chocolate, including history, science and folklore. Needless to say, there is a large section of recipes. The message is overhyped in places (e.g. the subtitle 'the astonishing truth about the world's greatest food') but there is a solid basis for many of the arguments. See www.naked-chocolate.com

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DEATH AND DYING

I'm Still With You

by **Carole J. Obley**

O Books 2008, 239 pp., £11.99, p/b.

This is the story of the author's own spiritual and psychic development and an account of people she has helped by making contact with deceased relatives. It also provides the roadmap outlining the author's understanding of death and the afterlife, which has much in common with the literature. There is some striking evidence and moving personal testimonies.

OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

The Schiller File

by **Paul Eugen Schiller**

Henry Goulden Books 2007, 137 pp., p/b.

Easter

by **Eleanor C Merry**

Floris Books 2008, 132 pp., £12.99, p/b.

The God of the New Millennium

by **Gregory Dark**

O Books 2008, 135 pp., £9.99, p/b.

The Flaming Door

by **Eleanor C Merry**

Floris Books 2008, 303 pp., £14.99, p/b.

Salad Leaves for All Seasons

by **Charles Dowding**

Green Books Ltd 2008, 200 pp., £10.95, p/b.

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