



## books in brief

David Lorimer

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

### SCIENCE-PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

#### *Images of Time – Mind, Science, Reality*

George Jaroszkiewicz

Oxford 2016, 305 pp., £25, h/b.

A fascinating and wide-ranging study of time, drawing on physics, mathematics, philosophy, religion, history, science fiction and even films. A leitmotif throughout the book is the Royal Society maxim '*nullius in verba*' - do not take anyone's word for it and test things for yourself. For the author, this involves avoiding metaphysics and focusing on empirical content, although metaphysical assumptions are themselves unavoidable. The main themes are concepts of time, classical time and quantum time. The author begins with a number of stimulating definitions, none of which is complete in itself and which are informed by paradigms, as he explains. The first chapter also explains many versions of the arrow of time, including thermodynamic, psychological, evolutionary and causal. On the other hand, time is in a sense cyclical, as Mircea Eliade elaborates. The relationship of observers to time involves contextuality, and the author quotes Heisenberg's warning that human language enables the construction of sentences without any content. Interestingly, he quotes Teilhard to the effect that the universe we know is a joint product of the observer and the observed.

He goes on to quote another insight from Teilhard (with approval) that our interpretation of the universe is not satisfying unless it covers the interior as well as the exterior of things, mind as well as matter. Many theories of everything focus only on the outside. The range of the book is such that nothing is omitted, even if it is treated in short order. There is a history of subjective images of time, cultural and literary images, objective and mathematical images, illusionary and causal images, then time in physics and biology, the dimensions and architectural time with themes developed from classical physics, relativity and quantum theory. These include time travel, imaginary time, irreversible time and quantised space-time. At times the treatment is quite mathematical and technical but the narrative remains very clear. The author distinguishes carefully between conjecture and empiricism and I enjoyed his observation in the epilogue of a growing realisation that thinkers of the past were easily as good as we are - including Aristotle. This is a comprehensive and highly readable account.

#### *Ockham's Razors*

Elliot Sober

Oxford 2015, 314 pp., £17.99, p/b.

Most readers will be familiar with Occam's razor or the principle of parsimony that states that simpler theories are better than more complex ones, other things being equal. This must be the most comprehensive treatment of the subject, providing as it does a history, parsimony in evolutionary biology, then in psychology with respect to chimpanzee mind-reading, and in philosophy. The history chapter explains a variety of versions, starting with Aristotle's principle that nature does nothing in vain and the covering argument between geocentric and heliocentric astronomy. In

the case of Newton, his formulation is that 'no more causes of natural things should be admitted than are both true and sufficient to explain their phenomena.' This naturalistic thought is taken up by Hume on the uniformity of nature, an argument he uses to dismiss the evidence for miracles. John Stuart Mill offers a more subtle formulation that we should not believe anything for which there is no evidence: the principle is methodological rather than ontological - to do with ways of knowing rather than the nature of reality.

There is an extensive discussion of Bayes and Bayesianism concerning the probability assigned to a hypothesis in the light of new evidence. Sober compares this with the idea of model selection and the falsification approach of Popper. In the psychology chapter, the author asks if chimpanzees are mind readers or just behaviour readers, which brings up the problem of blackbox influence - in this case the mechanisms or intervening variables that mediate the connection between stimulus and response. The last chapter may be of most interest to readers as it discusses atheism and the problem of evil as well as the mind-body problem and the causal efficacy of the mental. These raise the question of naturalism and identity theory where answers will depend on prior commitments and one's overall worldview. For me the important point is to use the principle with integrity rather than as a knee-jerk reaction in defence of naturalism and materialism. This book gives a subtle insight into the scope and limits of Occam's razor.

#### *The Natural and the Human*

Stephen Gaukroger

Oxford 2016, 402 pp., £30, h/b.

This book is the third volume of a magnum opus on science and the shaping of modernity - previous volumes have covered the periods 1210 to 1685 and 1680 to 1760 in the case of *The Collapse of Mechanism* and *The Rise of Sensibility*. This current book covers the period 1739 to 1841 (Hume to Feuerbach), so we may expect further volumes to appear. The scholarship is prodigious and his main thesis highlights the significance of the fundamental shift in scientific enquiry from the natural to the human realm, involving the naturalisation of the human - a process that has continued since that time. This means attempting to understand human behaviour and motivations in empirical rather than theological or metaphysical terms.

The first part covers the dichotomies of understanding in terms of reason and sensibility as well as the limits of certainty with the introduction of probability theory. This leads on to rethinking the nature of matter more in terms of force than mechanism. The second part covers anthropological medicine, philosophical anthropology, the natural history of man with the emergence of imperative disciplines such as anatomy, geography and history, and then social arithmetic and the rise of quantification. These disciplines formulate their own empirical questions. The third part discusses the naturalisation of religion along with the historicisation of Christianity and dogma and the rise of the idea of the evolution of religion. It is fascinating to read Bayle, Gibbon, Strauss and Feuerbach on these topics and to realise how radical they were in their own time. The reader comes away with a more nuanced understanding of how the sciences have shaped the modern outlook - the book is a real *tour de force*.

## The Concept of Nature

Alfred North Whitehead

Cambridge 2016, 132 pp., £14.99, p/b.

First published in 1920, this classic series of Turner Lectures by Whitehead represents an early attempt to get to grips with the new physics of relativity and its implications for philosophy of science. He thought that we needed a new concept of nature given realism and the structure of our perceptual knowledge. He resisted the attempt to bifurcate nature into mind and matter as he worked towards his magnum opus *Process and Reality* that came out about ten years later. He distinguishes thought about nature from sense-perception of nature, remarking that nature is self-contained for thought. He begins with this relationship between nature and thought, moving on to a critique of theories of bifurcation of nature. He then conducts a philosophical analysis of the major concepts of time, space and motion and the nature of objects. The reader engages with a major philosopher formulating a complex new set of ideas that are then summarised in the extra chapters at the end. Whitehead introduces his own terminology such as 'observational present' and 'percipient event' as key elements of our experience, thus extending the reader's grasp and vocabulary – the book will be of particular interest to philosophers of physics and historians of philosophy.

## On the Scent

Paolo Pelosi

Oxford 2016, 263 pp., £18.99, h/b.

The cover of this book features a steaming cup of coffee with the subtitle 'a journey through the science of smell' - a field in which there has been tremendous progress over the last 40 years and in which the author is a world expert. Smells are created by volatile molecules interacting with hundreds of receptors in the nose whereby a small change in the shape of the molecule is sufficient to transform a pleasant smell into a stench. Scientists have been investigating the chemical language of smell while perfume companies tried to shape it to their advantage. As humans rather than dogs, we are primarily driven by the visual system - dog owners will know that a dog's sense of smell is far more important to them, and the area of the brain dedicated to processing olfactory stimuli is larger than the visual area. The author sees smells as more related to pleasure rather than being essential for survival as in other animals. The author covers the whole field, and in particular the molecular aspects and the role of pheromones as messengers of sex and danger. He also looks at the biochemistry of olfaction and odorant-binding proteins. Some sections are pretty technical but nevertheless accessible to general readers. It is a fascinating exploration at the interface between science and a particular form of qualia.

## 13.8

John Gribbin

Icon Books 2015, 240 pp., £16.99, p/b.

John Gribbin is one of the most engaging and informed of popular science writers who also has a very good grasp of the history of science and biographies of its principal characters, which makes this a highly readable account of the history of cosmology. He sets out what he calls the most important factor in his introduction, namely the agreement between quantum theory and relativity theory that separately give right answers to the question of the age of the Universe - 13.8 billion years, just older than the ages of the stars it contains, as should be the case; they are just a little bit younger than the universe. Gribbin takes the reader on a tour of how we know the ages of stars and the age of the Universe using a number of different methods. One of the most interesting episodes is seeing how early indications of the Big Bang theory were missed by researchers originally committed to the Steady State theory. He still finds it mind-blowing that only 5% of the Universe is formed of the matter

with which we are familiar, 25% of cold dark matter and the rest is a form of dark energy. He concludes that the finding that the age of the Universe is just slightly older than the stars is both the ultimate truth of science and the ultimate proof that science is the best way to understand how the world works.

## Physics – A Short History

J. L. Heilbronn

Oxford 2016, 228 pp., £10.99, h/b.

J. L. Heilbronn is the editor of the *Oxford Companion to the History of Science*, a role that stands him in good stead when addressing the history of physics from quintessence to quarks. He points out that for the Greeks, physics stood between logic and ethics and was for many years referred to as natural philosophy. The progression of the focus of learning moves between independent private schools in antiquity, the court and library and Islam, then universities, academies and now university-government-industry. The book is effectively a short history of ideas that moves around the cultures of Europe depending on time and place, so there is a fascinating chapter on Islamic contributions. All the principal developments are described along with their personalities, and I found it interesting to learn the extent to which Newton's work was a response to Descartes. There is an interesting discussion of the reception of Newton's theory of gravity, which some people considered magical - he was simply describing the phenomenon. Physics, along with science in general, was professionalised during the 19th century. Cosmology also features prominently, since many physicists were trying to work out the nature of physical laws in relation to the existence or nonexistence of God. Heilbronn makes his own position clear in the last chapter when he aligns himself with views of Steven Weinberg, associating progress of physics with dedecification and the deanthropomorphisation of nature. I sympathise with the view that we no longer need capricious deities and traditional dogmas, but, for me, jettisoning the spiritual dimension is throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

## Making all Things New

Iliia Delio

Orbis Books 2016, 218 pp., £25, p/b.

Subtitled 'Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness', this impressive and erudite study is full of stimulating new ideas and connections between religion, spirituality and science. The author holds doctorates in pharmacology and historical theology, and is unusually well read. She defines catholicity as a conscious awareness of how everything forms one thing and has the power to reconnect the various dimensions of life as they reflect an underlying wholeness. Her overall vision is profoundly influenced by Teilhard de Chardin, which is also indicated in her subtitle. The word cosmos has been central in Western science and philosophy, and the meaning of catholicity has evolved both inside and outside the Church; the mediaeval synthesis of microcosm and macrocosm was overtaken by mechanistic lawfulness. 20th-century science, however, has introduced new understandings of wholeness and emergence, with what Teilhard called the complexification of consciousness; this wholeness is also relational.

The author then moves back to Jesus as a strange attractor and borrows some metaphors from quantum mechanics to describe baptism and Eucharist as forms of entanglement and the resurrection as a quantum phenomenon. Although I found this ingenious, I did not find it convincing as for her the resurrection seems to consist of living on in our relationships; this is poetic rather than factual language, as in the sentence that 'Jesus lives on in the heart of the universe in a new relatedness'. The idea of the Church as an open system, especially since Vatican II, is an interesting line of thought, and there is ample evidence that Pope Francis is moving in that direction. An open systems theology is an intriguing

idea, and the author shows how Teilhard's main ideas embody this. She encourages the Church to see revelation as process, relatedness and patterns of organisation. In her conclusion, she calls for a new catholicity, a new religion of the world based on an integrated consciousness of the whole, a deep relationality and a deepening of inner and outer wholeness: in short, recognition of connectedness as a basic reality of our existence. It is hard to disagree with such an inspiring aspiration.

### **Quantum Mind and Social Science**

**Alexander Wendt**

*Cambridge 2015, 354 pp., £19.99, p/b.*

In this brilliant and seminal work, Alexander Wendt ambitiously transcends the assumption that consciousness and social life can be understood in terms of classical physics, and recasts the ontology of social science in quantum terms by defining consciousness as a macroscopic quantum mechanical phenomenon. This represents a long overdue overhaul of assumptions and updates social thinking about the nature of reality. In classical terms, consciousness is often regarded as an anomaly and understood in mechanical or deterministic terms (there is no room for intention and free will), while it is integral to quantum theory, more so in some interpretations than others. The first chapter lays the groundwork for a quantum social science before three very lucid chapters explaining quantum mechanics and its challenges to the classical assumptions of materialism, atomism, determinism, mechanism, absolute space and time, and the subject-object distinction; there is also a very lucid account of five interpretations of quantum theory, including that of David Bohm.

The second part develops the theme of quantum consciousness and life through quantum brain theory, a discussion of panpsychism and neutral monism and the formulation of what he calls a quantum vitalism. Here the author combines the physical claim that the brain is capable of sustaining coherent quantum states with the metaphysical claim of panpsychism that consciousness inheres in the very structure of matter. He discusses this with respect to cognition, experience and will. The key to his quantum vitalism or pansychism is quantum coherence and here draws on the work of Mae-Wan Ho. He makes the very interesting claim that the essence of life is in fact subjectivity - matter only becomes life when organised into quantum coherent wholes, and intentional phenomena are in fact quantum mechanical. He believes, rightly I think, that the new materialists have failed to come to grips with hard problem of consciousness and remain caught up in the limits of the classical world view. (p. 147)

The next part elaborates a quantum model of man, discussing cognition, choice, agency and non-local experience in time. Then there is a section on the cultural entanglement implied by language and other minds, and the argument is brought together at an ontological level with the formulation of a quantum vitalist sociology where he summarises the shortcomings of the existing mainstream approach and argues for a new naturalism of quantum consciousness that allows human beings to be conscious, free and purposive. All this is underpinned by 'a phenomenological vitalism in which subjectivity is constituted by a physical but nonmaterial and unobservable life force: quantum coherence.' He sees humans as walking wave functions rather than classical machines so that human experience now has a home in a universe imbued with meaning. This book is a real game changer and an extraordinary interdisciplinary achievement that deserves the widest readership.

### **The Destiny of the Universe**

**Gerard M. Verschuuren**

*Paragon House 2014, 176 pp., \$19.95, p/b.*

The author is a geneticist working at the interface between science and religion – here he engages with the major questions of philosophy of science and religion, taking the reader on a journey leading to a wider and deeper understanding of the scope and limits of science – beyond the how to the why. In doing so he provides a largely missing philosophical background that many scientists naively ignore by not understanding the nature of their own subject and its corresponding ways of knowing. He gradually widens his enquiry from law and order to divine intelligence and from an impersonal deism to a personal theism – a God recognisable to Christian theology. Not all readers will be comfortable making the whole journey towards the Great Unknown but the author provides good reasons to justify his arguments.

### **What is Life?**

**Christopher Busby**

*QTP Publications, 125 pp., £10, p/b.*

Taking his cue from Erwin Schroedinger's book of the same title, Chris explores the origins and mechanisms of living systems based on a lifetime of research starting from molecular physical chemistry. He hypothesises that 'the key processes in living systems involve transfer of energy at infrared frequencies', and that this energy exchange is the life force. He notes that living creatures are hotter than their surroundings, and that this enables them to borrow energy, which is created and sustained by infrared radiation. As a specialist in the health effects of ionising radiation, he sees this as a principal cause of increased cancer incidence. He also gives some indication of the possibility of curing cancer through hyperthermia, that is heating up the tumour so as to cause 'more signals from the more remote tissue in the normal cell community without changing the signal resonance from the tumour community.' This leads him to speculate that treatment using selected frequencies might be successful. All this will be of particular interest to biologists working on health issues.

### **Creating Scientific Controversies**

**David Harker**

*Cambridge 2015, 260 pp., £18.99, p/b.*

Subtitled 'uncertainty and bias in science and society', this is an important work bringing to bear insights from the philosophy of science to what Harker calls created controversies. We associate science with authoritative reliability, objectivity, facts and rationality, but this does not remove the less stable human element. The point of departure is the way in which cigarette companies tried to promote the impression that there was no scientific consensus about the safety of their products. These tactics have now been applied in other areas, including food and drink, using doubt and uncertainty to confuse the public and protect industry interests. Sometimes, the inherent caution and uncertainty of science is misused. The first part draws lessons from the philosophy of science in terms of understanding its nature, the empirical approach, theory-laden observations, under-determination and lessons from the history and sociology of science.

The next part looks at biases, including confirmation bias, cherry picking of evidence, overconfidence and straightforward logical fallacies. The author provides a taxonomy of created controversies and how to detect them. The situation arises when it is claimed that there is an ongoing scientific debate about a matter on which there is in fact an overwhelming scientific consensus. Doubt and uncertainty are magnified, and this is then abetted by the journalistic search for balance, which can give a platform to extreme views. The third part describes number of created controversies in more detail - principally anthropogenic climate change and

the intelligent design issue. In the first case, there is an overwhelming scientific consensus called into question largely by interests supported by the oil industry. The second gives a very good account of the discrepancy between expert and public opinion where 'a personal sense of incredulity is not an objection to the evidence and arguments that favour the central components of evolutionary biology.' There are then shorter discussions of HIV and AIDS, vaccinations and autism, and GMOs. Readers will have their own views on these topics, which will not necessarily be those of the author, who I think underestimates some of the widespread problems associated with vaccinations while recognising the benefits (the pharmaceutical industry defends its interests vigorously in this respect). The controversy over GMOs is also identified as one of the deeper values and, as the author himself states, is arguably not a created controversy - I found his discussion helpful. Harker has done readers a great favour by so clearly delineating the nature and significance of created controversies.

## MEDICINE-HEALTH

### **Restoring the Healer**

**William Dorman, DMin**

*Templeton Press 2016, 182 pp., \$14.95, p/b.*

Drawing on his extensive experience as a hospital chaplain, William Dorman provides a compassionate and instructive guide to spiritual self-care for healthcare professionals in danger of physical and emotional burnout. Healthcare systems around the world are being cut to the bone, putting more pressure on professionals subject to increasing bureaucratic procedures that can crowd out the healer. The twelve chapters contains clinical stories from which various inferences drawn, along with prayers, meditations and reflections expressed in a universal language. People working in hospital inevitably come across tragic and sometimes avoidable situations that shake them to the core. It is tempting to depersonalise, but this route is not recommended by Dorman. Rather, people are encouraged to practise self-care, find balance, contend with limits and possibilities, express encouragement, compassion and kindness, and rediscover their passion; all this in the face of suffering and death. The final chapter encourages an attitude of gratitude as a basic spiritual disposition and contains a beautiful story about a surgeon expressing his gratitude for his team even in the face of apparent failure. The book can be highly recommended to anyone in the business of caring for others.

### **Nature Cures**

**N.H. Hawes**

*Hammersmith 2016, 1,130 pp., £24.99, p/b.*

[www.naturecures.co.uk](http://www.naturecures.co.uk)

Subtitled 'the A-Z of ailments and natural foods', this is an extraordinary resource that is the distillation of the website above. It falls into three sections: a comprehensive account of all aspects of the human body and bodily systems where a healthy nutritious diet is important and natural medicinal foods can help. This is followed by a section on hazards to human health, while the third section is an A-Z of nature cures safeguards including such topics as minerals, detoxification, household cleaners, pickling, raw juice therapy and daily essentials. The book is the result of 10 years of serious research and should be on every family bookshelf. Where useful, the foods are cross-referenced against conditions that they may help, while foods are listed with their significant components. There is also a certain amount of specific advice, for instance on alcohol and coffee. The format and index make it relatively easy to consult and as the book is a major contribution to the promotion of natural health and excellent value at the price.

### **Goodbye Parkinson's, Hello Life!**

**Alex Kerten with David Brinn**

*Divine Arts 2016, 232 pp., \$16.95, p/b.*

Alex Kerten runs a clinic in Israel, and people, around the world to experience what he calls his gyro-kinetic method for eliminating the symptoms of Parkinson's and regaining good health. This combines positive thinking, dance therapy, behaviour modification and martial arts and is based on 30 years of experience. Patients are encouraged to change their scripts, tune into their bodies and live in the present. The second section gives hands-on directions for various exercises, while the third discusses the role of music and the importance of these spires or caregiver. The publisher actually experienced the treatment himself, and it had a dramatic effect - hence his encouragement to write this very helpful book, which every patient should read and activate on a journey of new possibilities beyond conventional medical treatment, which of course still has an important role.

### **The Ethics of Personalised Medicine**

**Edited by Jochen Vollmann, Verena Sandow, Sebastian Waescher and Jan Schildman**

*Ashgate 2015, 285 pp., £70, h/b.*

In this context, personalised medicine (PM) is understood as the application of biological data to improve the diagnosis, therapy and prevention of diseases. It has become a symbol of medical progress and better healthcare, but has given rise to controversial debate in relation to its promises. In the last issue (p. 62) I reviewed a book on the decision trap created by an overly deterministic and statistical approach to the subject where patients become gene and risk carriers. Three main understandings of the term are cited: PM is not new because medicine has always been individualised; it is in fact holistic healthcare, as many readers might suppose; and it is treatment targeted at stratified subgroups using various genetic and molecular biomarkers. Apart from Chapter 6, most of the discussion is focused on the third view. Various sections explore concepts and contextual aspects, clinical research with a focus on oncology, personalised medicine and healthcare systems and some recommendations in the oncological field. My impression is that the third view is more accurately called stratified medicine, although personalised or individualised medicine is rhetorically more attractive. Much of the discussion is at a specialist in technical level, and the authors conclude that targeted treatment is realistic for only a minority of patients going to multiple genetic variations and the interplay between environmental and genetic factors.

## PHILOSOPHY-SPIRITUALITY

### **Radical Awakening**

**Amoda Maa**

*Watkins 2016, 255 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

Much is currently being published on awakening and non-duality with the concomitant deconstruction of the ego and sense of separation. I agree with the author when she says that there is an urgency today to evolve beyond an egocentric perspective in which we experience ourselves as separate from each other, from the world and from life. Our planet is looking for a more interconnected humanity. Metaphysically, this means recognising that we are all manifestations of the one divine life. When we see the divine in everyone, all separation dissolves and we become aware of our true identity. The author describes her own process of surrender, leading to an experience of unbounded spaciousness. So the book invites readers to embrace every moment and realise that every experience can reveal our true nature. The injunction to welcome everything is perhaps the most challenging and evokes the most resistance. The author rightly criticises the spiritual materialism of our time, which

associates becoming spiritual with doing spiritual things rather than looking inside ourselves. Indeed, reading books like this can be another form of distraction from taking responsibility for our own inner reality. If the first stage is finding God in everything, then the next is awakening in the midst of everyday life, to which the second part of the book is devoted. Here there is much valuable practical advice from one who has herself trodden the path.

### **Spirit of Fire – The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin**

**Ursula King**

*Orbis Books 2015 (1996), 258 pp., \$26, p/b.*

I reviewed this book when it first came out, and now a further 20 years have passed since the death of Teilhard de Chardin in 1955. It is a moving, informative and sympathetic account of his fascinating life, with all its difficulties and challenges. He was born into aristocratic circumstances, which perhaps helped give him a certain independence of mind. He entered the Jesuit order in 1899, spending time in Jersey, Egypt and England during his training. He was interested in geology and palaeontology from an early age and spent many years in China from the 1920s onwards. It is clear that his experience as a stretcher bearer during the First World War made a great impression on him, but during this time he also wrote some significant mystical works. Like Rupert Sheldrake, he was fundamentally influenced by Henri Bergson, who contributed to formulation of his evolutionary vision with many terms such as the noosphere and the Omega Point that have passed into common usage.

The chapter on faces of the feminine introduces the importance of love and his long friendship with his relation Marguerite Teilhard-Chambon. Ursula describes his intense relationship with the American sculptress Lucile Swan from 1932 and the enormous inner struggles both underwent - he in relation to remaining true to his vocation despite the censorship of the authorities. He even gave her his private diaries in order for her better to understand his situation. Seeing them together in one of the many photographs in the book conveys a strong impression of closeness. Teilhard had many friends and supporters, both personal and professional, but the initiative remained with the authorities and his central ideas remained unpublished. In her postscript, Ursula reflects on Teilhard's legacy and its progress over the last twenty years. People from across a wide range of disciplines have been inspired by his work. She mentions the mutual embeddedness of noosphere and biosphere, for instance in connection with ecological justice, reminding readers that the noosphere was for him a deeply spiritual dimension. Above all, she says, his love of life and deep hope can still speak to us today. I strongly recommend this book, especially to readers unfamiliar with his life, but also as a reminder of one of the great and visionary lives of the last century. It is richly illustrated with black and white photographs and contains many inspiring sidebar quotations from his work.

### **Teilhard de Chardin - Seven Stages of Suffering**

**Louis M. Savary and Patricia H. Berne**

*Orbis Books 2016, 119 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

This profound book is based on an essay by Teilhard on the meaning and constructive value of suffering, where he sees suffering as containing a potential energy that can be transformed into the ascensional force of the world. His vision is that suffering transformed into a shared longing for healing could hasten the advent of the kingdom of God. In the introduction, the authors give an account of Teilhard's own suffering. It is easy to forget the opposition of the Church to his work that not only resulted in none of his major work being published during his lifetime, but also long periods of exile and isolation, even during his last few years in New York. His body was buried without ceremony in a grave with

a stone that did not even have his full name engraved - an extraordinary reflection, given the influence of his work over the last 60 years.

The basic structure is given by seven stages of suffering based on resistance, transformation and union. The fundamental propositions at the beginning of the book are that pain and suffering are inevitable, that we are called to participate actively in God's evolutionary project, that human suffering can generate energy for this, and that Christian spirituality is represented by the cross. As the book moves through the various stages, readers are given instructions about how to transform the energy of suffering and focus it on a particular person or healing. There are moving prayers and examples of practice. The whole process takes place within what Teilhard called *Le Milieu Divin* in which we have our being. There are times when people have to move beyond the hope of cure to healing in a wider sense and can use their suffering in the service of growth. Suffering can involve an enormous expenditure of energy, and with a little focus this can be redirected. One woman, while she was dying, put up a Care Page on the Internet, where she encouraged people in a similar situation to be grateful for small things. The final chapter culminates in detachment and forgiveness as one moves into the transition of death. This book is an important spiritual resource for the suffering and dying.

### **Suffering: if God exists, why doesn't he stop it?**

**John Morris**

*Circle Books (John Hunt) 2016, 71 pp., £5.99, p/b.*

In this short, succinct and accessible account endorsed by many public figures including Martin Rees, John Morris tackles head-on the issues raised by theodicy - God and the problem of evil and suffering. He himself has a profoundly handicapped grandson, so speaks from personal experience. There was much public debate on the subject following the 2004 tsunami - in a similar vein to the 1755 Lisbon earthquake. The classic statement of the problem is that an omnipotent and omniscient God cannot also be good because he lets suffering continue - so he is either lacking in goodness or power or both. The God envisaged by the author is both personal and loving but one who has restricted his/her power in order to guarantee creativity and freedom. He/she is, as Whitehead suggests, involved in the evolutionary process with a moral purpose to multiply goodness and bring growth out of agonising situations - suffering is then part of the package where virtue can be chosen for its own sake. In comparing the philosophies of other religions, Morris feels that the Christian suffering God is a real advantage. Many readers will be familiar with these arguments but the lucid exposition encourages them to revisit and perhaps rethink them. There can be no definitive answer, but as humans we should feel obliged to engage with the challenge.

### **Christ and the Cosmos**

**Keith Ward**

*Cambridge 2015, 271 pp., £18.99, p/b.*

Keith Ward will be well known to many readers for his work on science and religion as well as philosophical theology. In this reformulation of Trinitarian doctrine, he introduces various historical perspectives and biblical sources of Trinitarian thought before criticising a social approach that he thinks ultimately incoherent; he contrasts his view of three forms of existence in one divine Subject with those who refer to the Trinity as a society or communion of three individual subjects. He explains that for him God as Father remains transcendent to all creation, God as Son manifests in creation, while God as Spirit unites creation to the divine (p. 220); in other words, transcendent, incarnate and immanent in created things. His central argument for this formulation is 'because *theosis* is the purpose of creation, and the heart of Christian faith. This universe is created in order that autonomous persons can come into existence,

can shape their own lives freely and creatively, and can find their fulfilment in being united to the divine in love.' I find this an inspiring vision where Jesus is the self-expressive unfolding of the divine will, 'the embodied Ideal of human personhood.' (p. 245). The last chapter explains why a modern formulation of the Trinity must be cosmic, in view of our new knowledge of the nature of the universe. Here Keith builds on the work of Whitehead and John MacQuarrie with his primordial, expressive and unitive forms of divine action - on our planet, this can be expressed through the Christian faith, but it might take different forms elsewhere without changing the essentials. Although quite technical, this book provides an important update of thinking about the Trinity.

### **The Logic of Enlightenment**

**Dave S Henley**

*iff Books (John Hunt) 2015, 221 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

Subtitled 'a cognitive theory of spirituality', this searching and analytical book should, according to its own argument, have been subtitled 'a non-conceptual theory of spirituality.' It ranges over philosophical and spiritual themes from East and West involving our fundamental orientation in life, the nature of the self, paradox and meaning. Writers like Tolstoy have arrived at the limits of logic and rationality and suffer a loss of meaning that can only be transcended through a new form of perception and understanding as given in mystical experience, which the author explores. The self is recontextualised within the Self, the separation inherent in the mental and conceptual is transcended. This process highlights the limitations of Western philosophy, encapsulated in the Upanishads: 'that which is not comprehended by the mind but by which the mind comprehends - know that to be Brahman.' Meister Eckhart realised this, but not Descartes or David Hume. They did not arrive at a state of pure consciousness, which is the underlying feature of meditation.

Henley explores the nature of paradox and contradiction, and it is here that there is a large gap in his reading, namely Iain McGilchrist's work *The Master and his Emissary*, with its discussion of the different capacities of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Paradoxes are generated by the very operating system of the left hemisphere, but can be understood intuitively by the right (the same applies to jokes). So part of the argument attributed solely to mystical experience can also be resolved by understanding the relative roles of the hemispheres. The rest has to do with the development of self-awareness through spiritual practice that transcends thought so as to allow a direct experience of pure consciousness or the Tao or Atman. This is not so much a conceptual change (p. 146) as a move beyond concepts and indeed the existential choices of continental philosophy (although, as he points out, it is related to the fall and redemption of man). So the level of enlightenment involves 'not only knowing who you are, but also a higher form of intelligence' (p. 205). Given that enlightenment is by definition inconceivable, it can only be represented by symbols, which is what religions have done. For Henley, the path involves surrendering the primacy of conceptual thought (of which this book is full!) and taking up a spiritual practice that puts one consciously on the path. This is a stimulating exploration for readers conditioned by Western rationality.

### **Do We Need God to be Good?**

**C. R. Hallpike**

*Christian Alternative (John Hunt) 2016, £13.99, p/b.*

Much strident rhetoric has been written by new atheist philosophers and scientists about the negative effects of religion in terms of war, hatred and intolerance, restating similar arguments by Russell and others 100 years ago. The author of this original book is an anthropologist and as such has a different perspective on the social origins of morality as observed in cultures around the world. He argues that moral ideas are essentially social and can be

reinforced by religious systems encouraging the cultivation of personal virtue. Basic to his understanding is the way in which we form group identities that define us both within the group and over and against other groups. He shows through powerful experiments that even artificially created groups soon reflect a dynamic of amity and enmity. So after an introductory section on human nature, the author moves on to religion and morality where he demonstrates that religion is very much more than a belief in supernatural beings and exhibits a sophisticated level of reasoning equal in every way to the most rigorous of modern scientists. In considering the outlook of Epicurus and ancient materialist atheists, he remarks that they prioritise individual pleasure and do not think there is such thing as society. Religious ethics can provide a higher perspective on social ethics and move people beyond a selfish approach.

The next chapter discusses the nature of humanism, quoting extensively from AC Grayling. The prime values seem to be autonomy and rationalism, involving the primacy rather than the transcendence of the self. Hence the glorification of success. The author considers the humanist critique of religion, responding to some of the commonest criticisms. In the last chapter, he tackles the humanist claim that the world would be a much better place if religion could disappear and atheist rationalism replace it. Scientifically, he shows how a purely biological approach tends to lead to the denial of consciousness and free will, as we also find in behaviourism. In other words, it is essentially impersonal and objective when we know from our own experience that the real value of life is in fact subjective. Based on this view that removes the human dignity of the individual, totalitarian atheist regimes have killed millions of people during the 20th century. On the other hand, we also have a growing culture of narcissism. This all provides a sharp corrective to the more simplistic biological and humanist views of selfish individualism. Instead, the author asks how adding the spiritual dimension of existence to the material dimension changes the kind of ethical system we can have. In Christianity, the fatherhood of God is linked to the brotherhood of man, and the dignity of the individual is assured. He also reminds us that appalling acts committed in the name of religion cannot in fact be justified in the name of that religion.

### **The Tradition of Liberal Theology**

**Michael Langford (SMN)**

*Eerdmans 2014, 166 pp., \$18, p/b.*

This is a clearly written and accessible overview of liberal theology, an approach that seeks the balance between religious faith and reason. The book begins with an overview of the term that leads into an analysis of eleven typical characteristics of the liberal tradition and theology. This will be particularly helpful to those readers less seasoned in the field with its discussion of reason and revelation, free will, toleration, the combination of faith and works and a minimal number of basic teachings, in contrast with more fundamentalist approaches. Liberals are wary of an overemphasis on miracles but nevertheless engage with the resurrection, which Michael briefly discusses. The account of thirteen key figures in liberal Christian tradition makes interesting reading and contains a number of well-known as well as less well-known people including, interestingly, Elizabeth I. This gives the reader a good understanding of the tradition and its development. The final part looks at some alternatives, including materialism with its own rigid dogmatism and facile connection between evil and religious belief. Michael is a reliable and sympathetic guide to the issues he so lucidly expounds.

**Availability****Robert J. Wicks***Ave Maria Press 2016, 141 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

The main influences on this thoughtful book are Thomas Merton and Henri Noewen. To be available is to be present to oneself, others and God; also to live life in a prayerful fashion in the presence of God. The first part considers the themes of uniqueness, failure and forgiveness, self-awareness and clarity, all of which are related and underpinned by critical self questioning. For others, we can become a caring presence, and for the author it is important this be based firmly in Christianity. There are questions for reflection at the end of each chapter and a selection from Scripture. Prayer can also help develop the necessary self-awareness and compassion. I was struck by a passage from Jean-Pierre Dubois Dumeénil about the need for an interior life - for silence in the midst of noise, contemplation in a century of action, peace among outbursts of violence, quality to counterbalance quantity, slowness to compensate for speed, and the need for human warmth when everything is being rationalised or computerised. The book is a searching inner examination, a call to live with real spiritual integrity.

**The 22 Laws of Inner Peace****Eliphas Levi***www.22laws.com 2016, 98 pp., no price given.*

Eliphas Levi (1810-1875) was a well-known mystic and sage in his day and in this short book, translated from French, he sets out a number of principles for inner peace including working on one's character, humility, doing one's duty in the present by doing good today is not seeking the glory that comes from the impulsive admiration of men. Then there are a number of instructive fables and two short pieces on how to attract your desires and create good opportunities - we are advised to believe that we can do something, then act. The last section contains some striking quotations: 'the law is slow and consistent progress is the universal law of nature;' 'it is the imagination alone that accomplishes all miracles;' and 'the source of most diseases is in emotional disorders; we must begin by meeting the soul, and then the cure for the body will quickly follow.'

**You are History****Gordon Phinn***White Crow Books 2015, 159 pp., £11.99, p/b*

This is the third volume in the eternal life trilogy and subtitled 'the soul, the higher self and our state of divinity'. The content shifts between Gordon and the perspective of his Higher Self or Monad, which expresses itself through a number of partly parallel lifetimes in different time periods - so there is a sense of group identity over time. Hence the title and the phrase 'you are everybody, everybody is you. You are history.' In this view, we are all fundamentally expressions of the one light and are capable of bridging personality with the Higher Self when we remember to do so. The Monad is the Soul of which we are an evolving aspect subject most closely to influences within our own group. A key practice is that of witnessing - the observer consciousness, which can help bring about a more harmonious relationship between the personality and the Soul. Towards the end of the book, there are some interesting quotations from other authors also writing about the Monad, including Blavatsky, Leadbeater, Bailey and more recently Chris Bache and Jane Roberts. The term used by Emerson, oversoul, is a popular one and encourages the reader to identify more with the core oneness that underlies our individual expressions. In this sense, the One is present in the many and it is the task of the many to realise their oneness with the One.

**Enso Morning: Daily Meditation Gifts****Jacob Watson***O Books (John Hunt) 2016, 347 pp. £13.99, p/b.*

This collection of morning blessing letters was written over a six-month period as part of a thesis at Matthew Fox's University of Creation Spirituality. Each contains seven sections: welcome, silent meditation, affirmation of physical self, then of the emotional and spiritual self, blessing for the day and gift of the day. They are very simple and direct and, although indexed at the front, the gift is not revealed until the end. Readers are reminded each day is a real gift and that the quality of our lives largely depends on the attention we give to everyday matters and sensations. Sometimes he uses imagery, as in imagining you are standing under a waterfall that washes out your feelings and the corresponding blessing is that whatever is not necessary can fall away, keeping us clean, fresh and pure. The best way of using this book is as intended, namely as a morning ritual, either opened at random or by selecting a particular appropriate theme. It is an inspiring exercise.

**PSYCHOLOGY-CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES****Consciousness from Zombies to Angels****Christian de Quincey***Park Street Press 2008, 306 pp., \$18.95, p/b.*

This wide-ranging book takes the reader through philosophy, science and mysticism in a study of the nature of consciousness. In the form of an owner's guide for the mind. For philosophy, this is the hard problem, for science, arguably the final frontier and for spirituality an abiding mystery. The book is structured into seven steps for transforming your life: watch your language, identify the problem, learn how to look, recognise your patterns, know yourself, embrace your shadow and practise transformation. On the journey, we need to use the faculties of reason, observation, feeling and intuition. By approaching consciousness from these three different angles, the author is able to help the reader clarify various meanings and processes and the lenses we use to understand the world. The scientific section explores hardwiring for God and co-creative quantum consciousness, the author adds his voice to the many thinkers who are now claiming that consciousness is primordial and cannot be fully understood through a third-person perspective. He calls this plate-glass science rather than looking-glass science. The latter entails subjectivity, engagement and quality, meaning, growth and transformation. This naturally leads on to the third part of spiritual practice and the mystical journey with its focus on feelings, the perspective of the witness and the cultivation of silence. The book will appeal specially to readers are looking for an integrated understanding of consciousness including philosophy, science and mysticism.

**Essays in Truth – Glimpses into Reality****Nick Roach and Sally Powell***NR Publishing 2015, 193 pp., £9.99, p/b – www.nickroach.co.uk*

Nick Roach began his spiritual quest at an early age and underwent a prolonged process before he came to the experience that 'I am this'. He studied with Barry Long, who taught that 'stillness is the way.' I recently watched an interview with Barry shortly before he died, which was very interesting indeed. This book takes the form of a spiritual blog addressing various questions under the heading of enlightenment, insights, truth of love, revelations and world religions. His partner Sally also contributes a section. The questions are those that many spiritual seekers will be asking and Nick's answers are clear and direct. His fundamental practice is being aware of where you are and what you are feeling, which leads eventually and perhaps suddenly to the

insight that your true nature is what you are behind your thoughts, beliefs and feelings – pure being. He goes beyond the non-dual cliché that there is nothing happening to no one and sees liberation as beyond enlightenment. Nick and Sally write eloquently about love, both making a key distinction between having sex and making love – for the man this means loving the woman selflessly and consciously (Barry Long also writes eloquently about this). The book offers a wise and compassionate perspective on enlightenment and the spiritual life.

### **Positive Psychology**

**Bridget Grenville-Cleave**

*Icon Books 2016, 245 pp., £6.99, p/b.*

Many readers will be familiar with the term positive psychology, pioneered by Martin Seligman and his colleagues. Oddly enough, positive psychologists make very little reference to other pioneers in the field such as Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology. Positive psychology has managed to penetrate some universities to a larger extent than either humanistic or transpersonal psychology. It has always struck me as a huge shortcoming that psychology undergraduates will for the most part have never heard of Ken Wilber, Charles Tart and Stan Grof. That aside, this is an excellent practical introduction to the field. The author reminds us of research indicating that around 40% of our happiness is determined by intentional activities over which we have control. While the main features of positive psychology are thoroughly covered, such as positive emotions and relationships, barriers to well-being, meaning and purpose, character strengths, mindset and accomplishment, the author includes other important lifestyle factors as well - emotional intelligence, appreciative inquiry, gratitude, mindfulness, nutrition, resilience and exercise. There are practical activities interspersed throughout the book so that readers can treat it as a research project. In the final analysis, it is our attitudes that are key, as the author explains in her helpful discussion of different explanatory styles based on optimism and pessimism. She encourages us to savour life rather than spend the average 3.5 hours a day watching TV (over three working days a week!), which doesn't seem to make us happy anyway.

### **The Mindfulness Key**

**Sarah Silverton, with Vanessa Hope and Eluned Gold**

*Watkins 2016, 175 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

This authoritative book, with a foreword by the pioneer of mindfulness, Professor Jon Kabat-Zinn, is also endorsed by the Centre for Mindfulness Research at Bangor University. Although there are many books on mindfulness now on the market, this one stands out with its clear instructions and explanations along with practical exercises and illuminating case histories. It is focused on dealing with stress, anxiety and depression. The first part gives an overview of mindfulness and its practice, while the second works with life's difficulties, applying mindfulness techniques to depression, stress and anxiety, relationships, children, carers and illness. At any point it is possible to step back and become aware of one's emotions and reactions. One can slow down from constant doing to the stillness of being. This can also apply to ordinary daily activities such as eating, breathing and walking. Applying mindfulness to, for instance, pain, can transform one's perceptions and help people move forward. The same applies to reactions to a serious diagnosis. Mindfulness also seems to enhance empathy, which is important for carers. We can all benefit from living more mindfully, and this book shows us how it can be done.

### **Mindfulness**

**Tessa Wyatt**

*Icon Books 2016, 218 pp., £6.99, p/b.*

It is symptomatic that publishers are bringing out their own guides to mindfulness so that I am reviewing two in a single issue. Tessa Watt did her training in the centre where Sarah Silverton works and has been part of the Parliamentary group on mindfulness that recently published a significant report. Needless to say, there is an overlap in the contents between the two books, which are both well written and set out. The emphasis of this book is less clinical and chapters are single words such as space, breath, body, attitude, reacting, and sensations. Exercises and personal reflections are built into the text such as the simple act of really tasting a couple of raisins. The author emphasises the importance of being in the moment non-judgementally and accepting feelings as they are. Both books encouraging readers to slow down and create pauses in our frenetic activities as well as in our thoughts. I liked the idea of listing nourishing and depleting activities and seeing how one can re-prioritise one's life. On balance, I would recommend this book is an introductory text and the other one for those with a more clinical slant.

### **The Psychology of the Internet**

**Patricia Wallace**

*Cambridge 2015, 392 pp., £27.99, p/b.*

It is a giddy thought to think how much has happened with the Internet since the first edition of this comprehensive book in 1999. The approach is research-based and provides fascinating insights into our online behaviour while encouraging critical thought about the Internet and its development. The various chapters cover the new psychology of impression formation (your online persona), group dynamics, online aggression, the psychology of interpersonal attraction, altruism, online gaming, child development, gender and sexuality, privacy and surveillance as well as addictive properties. The author asks if there has been an increase in narcissism, citing calls to self-focused action in Facebook and Google plus. Personality types also play a role whether on an individual or group basis. A 2010 study of 2000 generation M2 children and adolescents found that average total media use was more than 7 1/2 hours a day, an increase of 20% from five years earlier. If multitasking and multi-screening are factored in, then the figure jumped to 10 hours 45 minutes.

This raises the possibility, discussed in Chapter 11, that we are almost constantly online with the emergence of a 24/7 working week. This makes it hard to achieve so-called work/life balance involving managing blurred boundaries and spillover into personal life. There is a good discussion on the prevalence of Internet addiction. It turns out that, according to one US survey, one third of teens and young adults check Facebook at least every 15 minutes – and a Taiwanese tourist visiting Melbourne walked right off the pier while checking her Facebook app; the rescue was complicated by her trying to swim while holding her phone above the water! Apparently a key factor is FOMO – fear of missing out – and those with high scores spend more time trying to stay connected. As for the future, there will surely be surprises in store but overall developments are likely to continue to reflect positive and negative aspects of human nature.



**Ghostology****Steven T. Parsons***White Crow Books 2016, 282 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

Ghostology is simply defined here as the study of ghosts, distinguishing it from ghost hunting and parapsychology. It is a study that implicitly goes back to the earliest times. I myself never use the term ghost, preferring apparition instead. The author has a scientific and technical background, as is apparent from the contents and approach of the book, including a chapter on critical thinking. He goes into the investigation process, for instance how to question a witness, before dealing with aspects of monitoring and measuring and moving on to more technical and specialist matters. Sometimes a change of temperature can be significant, and some apparitions can be assessed electromagnetically. The environment as a whole needs to be monitored and measured with the best equipment, on which the author gives plenty of advice. He has a chapter on electronic voice phenomena and a corresponding one on sound recording. He also advises on photography and video and discusses more generally the nature of light. Towards the end, he provides strong evidence that so-called orbs in digital photography are in fact dust particles, an argument reinforced by a recent discussion with a visiting neighbour. In short, this book is the most comprehensive and authoritative guide to the field.

**ECOLOGY AND FUTURES STUDIES****Earth Matters****Richard D. Bardgett***Oxford 2016, 191 pp., £18.99, p/b.*

Subtitled 'how soil underlies civilisation', this highly readable and authoritative book bridges the science of soil into a general readership and as such should be widely read by environmentalists and others. He makes clear that the proper and sustainable management of soil is a critical imperative as mismanagement has led to the demise of previous civilisations. This is particularly important for us as modern industrial methods compromise the organic matter in soil. Bardgett explains how soil forms over many millennia in different layers depending on climate, temperature, human intervention and the passage of time. Biodiversity is important in our soils, even if there is a certain redundancy in terms of replacing certain elements. He mentions Sir Albert Howard in this context, but not Lady Eve Balfour, founder of the Soil Association. Her book is not in the index. In passing, he mentions the importance of *terroir* in the production of wine. Large amounts of soil are paved over or developed every year - this is particularly the case in China, where it has had an impact on domestic food production. Another chapter deals with effect of war on soil - the land in northern France is only just recovering completely after 100 years. Then he considers soil and climate change (soil as a carbon sink) and prospects for the future in terms of dealing with rapid soil change. This requires soil to be placed on the political agenda, as has already happened in the UN. Bardgett concludes, rightly, that 'soil needs to be considered as an investment to be protected and cared for, and as part of the support network for human life.' And, he could have added, all life, not just us humans.

**Hope and Grief in the Anthropocene****Lesley Head***Routledge 2016, 181 pp., £90, h/b.*

This book is part of the new series on researching the Anthropocene, a term that is becoming increasingly familiar and which is explored in some detail here. The primary irony is that the term stands for the fundamental influence of humans on the biosphere, but at this point things are

no longer under our control. Moreover, we are still using the assumptions of modernism that include separation of humans from nature and the hope of progress towards a better world. The author feels that we are in fact going through a process of denial and grieving with the loss of the modern self and its corresponding hope, with the looming prospect of an increase in disasters and catastrophes. We are living within this unstable system and trying to work on it at the same time while moving from a model based on impact towards one based on relationships and participation. This means not so much having hope but practising it; this is poignantly put by an environmentalist who feels that she is a kind of schizophrenic where part of her brain thinks that her children don't have a future, while the other says that we have to keep going anyway. So far as the future of the planet is concerned, we all find ourselves somewhere on the continuum between optimism and pessimism, but we are expected to express hope even if this is none too realistic in view of what we know. The final chapter suggests how we can operate as Anthropoceneans - we have emotional work to do, we have to come to terms with uncertainty and develop relational rather than linear concepts, we need to realise allure embedded in the earth and learn to share. The author is quite right that we need a new operating system and provides helpful signposts along the way.

**China Confronts Climate Change****Peter H. Koehn***Earthscan 2015, 209 pp., £32, p/b.*

If one did not already realise, the foreword to this significant book highlights that China is currently responsible for one third of the world's greenhouse gas output and 16 of the world's 20 most polluted cities live within its boundaries. In the wake of Paris, actions in China assuming even greater importance. The traditional approach is centralised and top-down, but these policies may not be implemented on the ground. Hence the importance of this book and what it reports in terms of grassroots initiatives within China's regions to address climate change. This includes some grassroots pressure owing to the effects of pollution on health, particularly air quality. Although China is developing industrially and still building large numbers of coal-fired power stations, they are also leaders in renewable energy, particularly wind and solar. They have plans in place for vast eco-cities, one of which opening in 2020 will accommodate 800,000 people. The author criticises this for still being based on the centrality of the car even though public transport will be well developed. In his conclusion, he highlights the importance of multilevel governance, 1% actions that make a small contribution, and consumptive responsibilities in which we can all take part by thinking more carefully about what we buy.

**Famine, Affluence and Morality****Peter Singer***Oxford 2016, 86 pp., \$9.95, h/b.*

The title essay of this book first came out in 1972 at the time of a vast refugee crisis involving 9 million people East Bengal. It was originally published in *Philosophy and Public Affairs* and has continued to create a huge stir around the world. Bill and Melinda Gates contribute the foreword, where they remark that child mortality before the age of five has dropped from 20% in 1960 to 5% now, but that still represents 6.3 million a year from conditions like diarrhoea, pneumonia or malaria that we know how to prevent or cure. Even back then, Singer had become a vegetarian and was giving 10% his income to Oxfam. In his new preface, he gives examples of readers who have founded inspiring initiatives and reflects on the uncomfortable conclusion of his article that very few of us are living fully ethical lives.

This becomes clear when one considers that in some cases as little as \$200 can save the life of a child. Most of us could afford this sum, but we choose to spend our money

on other things, including luxuries like dining out, or in my case wine. His argument is straightforward: 'if it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, we ought, morally, to do it.' Of course, millions of people are in a similar situation and do not, for instance, contribute \$5 to a cause - in which case, Singer argues, we are still morally obliged to contribute as much as we can. This is not just out of charity, but rather duty. Putting figures on his argument, he suggests that if a household earns \$50,000 and spends \$30,000 on necessities, they should give away \$20,000. The household earning \$100,000 can give away \$70,000 (although more tax would be deducted). When he applies this analysis to the top 10% all Americans, giving away between one third one of the top and 10% at the bottom would generate \$404 billion a year, while the cost of fully meeting the millennium development goals is only \$189 billion a year. Lester Brown applies a similar argument to governments, but in either event it is clear that there is a lack of political will and/or personal moral commitment. Every reader will need to gauge their own response to this powerful plea.

### **Philosophy of Nature**

**Svein Anders Noer Lie**

*Routledge 2016, 220 pp., £95, h/b.*

This philosophical treatise challenges the view that any form of manipulation of nature is equivalent to any other form rather than reflecting on how we should change nature. The author argues instead that because things have natures, there are in fact good and bad ways to manipulate them. He regards naturalness as a description of the way things are rather than how they ought to be. Perception therefore precedes ethics since our descriptions have a bearing on our values. The first two chapters are perhaps the most interesting for the general reader as they discuss different interfaces of natural, for instance in relation to culture, or as intrinsic. The second chapter provides a history of concepts of naturalness in Western philosophy, leading onto the author's own view based on dispositions and what he calls relational realism with a more applied discussion on wilderness stewardship in the last chapter.

## **DEATH AND DYING**

### **A Lawyer Presents the Evidence for the Afterlife**

**Victor and Wendy Zammit** ([www.victorzammit.com](http://www.victorzammit.com))

*White Crow Books 2013, 285 pp., £11.99, p/b.*

When I was working on my own book *Survival* in the early 1980s, my chapter on evidence considered the topic both from a scientific and legal point of view, and I consulted the then authoritative book on the subject, namely *On Evidence*, by Sir Rupert Cross. This is very significant for a case history approach as one-off events cannot be repeated in a laboratory so that one is trying to ascertain what is actually the case and whether it has been reliably reported and indicates proof beyond reasonable doubt. The doubt of what Zammit calls the closed-minded sceptic is far from reasonable and rejects any evidence on *a priori* grounds. This never entails looking at the evidence or actually trying to disprove it, but rather ignoring it altogether. In this book, the Zammits present a compendium of evidence not only about the afterlife, but about psychic faculties more generally. It is not a question of belief, but rather about weighing the evidence, of which a great deal has accumulated over the last 140 years. When sceptics are cross-examined, they usually come up short because they simply don't know what they are talking about. I remember a TV programme where a studio member said that reincarnation was impossible, but he had read nothing, including Ian Stevenson. His opinion was therefore uninformed and consequently invalid after uninformed.

The impressive bibliography lists all the main sources, while the topics covered in the 32 chapters include mediums, near death experiences, out of body experiences, deathbed visions, remote viewing, mediums, xenoglossy, past life memories and instrumental trans-communication. In my view, some areas of evidence are much stronger than others, but the whole historical accumulation has been sufficient to convince the vast majority of open-minded sceptics who previously knew nothing about the topic. Sir William Barrett is correctly quoted as saying that 'I have failed to find that a single person who ridicules the evidence for the afterlife has given to the subject any serious and patient consideration.' The final chapter contains what I think is an excellent summary of points gleaned from the afterlife literature that can be repeatedly observed. Even taking this short section on board would be helpful to people unfamiliar with the field. A combative and courageous book on a vital topic.

### **What is a Near-Death Experience?**

**Dr Penny Sartori**

*Watkins 2016, 140 pp., £7.99/ h/b.*

Penny Sartori is a nurse well known for her research on NDEs and is the author of *The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences*. This book is part of a new series ([www.whatisseries.com](http://www.whatisseries.com)) of introductions to life-enhancing topics with practical applications. It begins with 20 compelling reasons for reading the book before explaining key features - chapters as questions and answers, case studies, focal points and follow-up. Penny covers elements of NDEs - who has them and under what circumstances, life changing effects, scientific explanations and lessons from the NDE. Useful case studies illustrate a particular aspect of the experience and there are reviews of cases from non-Western countries. Some reported changes focus specifically on spiritual outlook relating to values, purpose and perception of interconnectedness. Penny calls for an expansion of our scientific understanding to embrace the insights of the NDE in a wider concept of consciousness. Along with her supervisor Peter Fenwick, Penny believes that NDEs have important implications for how we treat the dying. The list of further reading is rather academic for a popular book and does not include Peter and Elizabeth Fenwick's *Art of Dying* nor the popular books by Anita Moorjani and Eben Alexander.

### **Psychology and the Near-Death Experience – Searching for God**

**Roy Hill**

*White Crow Books 2015, 284 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

As the title suggests, this book takes a psychological approach to the near death experience that takes its reality and consequences seriously. It draws on a very wide range of experiences, some of which are recounted in detail, to formulate life as a learning journey where we learn to love (and forgive) better. The author reviews the features of the NDE and places it within a wider science of the soul as developed by psychologists such as Jung where God is immanent in the human being. This helps bring science and spirituality together. He explores the dark side of these experiences and lost souls more generally as well as the role of guardian angels. The book is informed by the author's strong faith, so that he writes sentences like 'misusing time equates to wasting God's gift of life', a phrasing that may not appeal to everyone. His fundamental message is a call for spiritual transformation and the co-creation of a new world in which love plays a more predominant role - which of course has been the core message of Christianity for 2000 years. The book certainly encourages readers in that direction.

**Only Love Remains****Attilio Stajano***Clairview 2015, 209 pp., £14.99, p/b.*

The powerful stories in this book convey lessons from the dying on the meaning of life and raise the important question of the relative roles of euthanasia and palliative care. The space given by palliative care assists the dying process 'in a world that denies death and regards the time of dying as a useless, painful and absurd time.' The implication is that it is better to limit this time rather than live through it, yet there are precious lessons to be gained in this liminal period. The request for euthanasia often conceals anguish and despair and the feeling of being a burden - yet the dying can remind us of what really matters in life, especially love and forgiveness of which there are a number of examples in the 20 or so case histories. I think the author is right when he maintains that 'the greatest desire of the dying is to have their needs and fears listen to; to be acknowledged as people who have relationships and the role they can still play, and to be respected for their dignity as people, neither compromised nor conditioned by their illness.' As Monika Renz points out in her book reviewed in the last issue, this period is an opportunity 'to free ourselves from our conditioning and the clutter of existence that accumulates during the frenzied business of living.' As he says, at the end only love remains.

**Soul Comfort****Alistair Conwell***O Books (John Hunt) 2016, 83 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

This is a reflective book on grief through the related concepts of consciousness, love, death and transformation. Death implies grief for the survivors but this will be affected by the person's understanding of life and death. The author's overall view is that death does not extinguish consciousness but transforms and distils it by removing the outermost layer of the ego to reveal a deeper soul consciousness. To see death spiritually is to experience grief in the same way and be open to transformation. He also takes NDEs as actual experiences of death. Conwell's propositions are both factual and poetic, inviting deeper reflection as the reader progresses. He sees consciousness as a connective ground, love as indestructible, death as a transition to a new state of consciousness, grief as the pain of love, and transformation as a part of the spiritual journey. This is uplifting while being based on deep insights into the processes involved. My only caution is the overuse of 'merely' - one can understand why it is used but death is not 'merely' the conclusion of a single chapter of life.

**More Things you can do when you are Dead****Tricia J. Robertson***White Crow Books 2016, 177 pp., £11.99, p/b.*

This is the follow-up to Trish's previous book, with 'more' added to the title. As with the first one, the treatment of the subject is down-to-earth and based on 30 years of fieldwork and extensive knowledge of the relevant literature. As such, this puts Trish in a strong position to convey the strength of the evidence as well as objections - frequently uninformed - to this line of enquiry. The various chapters cover materialisation, dropping communicators, earthbound spirits, poltergeists, possession and possession, reincarnation and mediumship. There is also an excellent chapter on paranormal healing with 15 first hand case histories. Communications come through many channels and the cumulative weight of evidence is very considerable - most objections are in fact metaphysically based on the philosophical conviction that such events are in principle impossible, in spite of the many intellectually reputable people who have investigated them. Swedenborg makes a welcome appearance at two places in the book. Trish makes a good case for continuing fieldwork to complement laboratory studies. The only unsatisfactory chapter was a very short one on quantum thinking, where the point made could be incorporated elsewhere in the narrative. I enjoyed the final

comment on Richard Hodgson ostensibly communicating as himself to a sceptical team who exclaimed 'Well, if I'm not Hodgson, he never lived!' An informative and stimulating read.

**A Long Letting Go****Marilyn Chandler McEntyre***Wm B. Eerdmans 2016, 123 pp., \$15, p/b.*

These Christian meditations on losing someone you love are written by a professor of medical humanities and former Professor of English who is also a long time hospice volunteer. The sections are short and devotional with four main headings: accompanying, witnessing, mourning and words for keeping watch. The stories are accompanied by prayers and she draws on the experiences of her own family, particularly the deaths of her mother and father. There are fears to be faced, despair, hope, confession and forgiveness as well as setting the house in order. Sometimes one just has to wait and accept the growing remoteness of the dying relative whose focus is moving elsewhere. Then there is release and gratitude for a good life lived. I like the idea that we have our bodies on loan, to be given back rather given up when we move on. A moving and compassionate book.

**GENERAL****Strategy – A History****Sir Lawrence Freedman***Oxford 2013, 751 pp., £16.99, p/b.*

This book was acclaimed by the Washington Post as arguably the best book ever written on strategy. It is an extraordinary achievement that literally does cover the history of strategy from its origins in evolution to modern day sophistication. The word is now ubiquitous, as Freedman points out in his preface, beginning the book with the sentence: 'everyone needs a strategy.' Although there is no agreed overall definition of the word, it is about balancing ends and means, identifying objectives and methods, and judiciously using available resources. The context is often one of competition or conflict where coalitions may be advantageous and strategy itself must be flexible in response to unexpected events. The first part looks origins, with chapters on the Bible, the Greeks, Sun Tzu and Machiavelli, and Satan. The story of David and Goliath epitomises the victory of the underdog, while the Greeks developed the key concepts of *bie* (strength) and *metis* (cunning) as alternative modalities. He sees Milton's Satan as lacking in prudence and wonders why he ever thought he could succeed against God (he nearly does with Job).

The subsequent parts deal with strategies of force, strategy from below, strategy from above, and theories on strategy. The scope of the book is truly encyclopedic but Freedman writes in a lucid style accessible to the general reader, who is carried along by the elegance and momentum of the narrative. Network readers will be interested in what he has to say about Tolstoy (there is also a section on Borodino). He uses the narrative of *War and Peace* to criticise Clausewitz's approach. He then reappears in a discussion of Weber and again as a key influence on Gandhi, who read his book *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and translated his article *A Letter to a Hindu*. The whole chapter on nonviolence is highly informative within the spectrum of approaches from below. Strategy from above mainly concerns management, while the limits of strategy become apparent with the emergence of dynamic complexity, which opens up a role for stories and scripts. It would have been interesting to have read some analysis of the political strategy of Vladimir Putin, who seems to be using a combination of denial, obfuscation and force - but maybe this is just another combination of the Greek strategies of strength and cunning. The book is a masterly and definitive account of strategy.

**A Foot in the River****Felipe Fernandez-Armesto***Oxford 2015, 294 pp., £20, h/b.*

This book about change in human cultures draws on a huge range of disciplines across the sciences, social science, history and linguistics, bringing evidence to bear on the author's thesis that human cultures are not in fact subject to evolution in the normal sense. There are no fully predictable determinants to our behaviour so that we are able to create or recreate our worlds through the free use of the imagination. His argument is that 'cultures do not evolve, develop, progress, nor follow any linear, predictable or regular trajectory. They just change: sometimes more, sometimes less, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse.' This contrasts, for instance, with the orderly organic process of Spengler and the cyclical ideas of Toynbee, who is only mentioned in passing. When the idea of evolution is so culturally pervasive, it is tempting to impose this on society, which the author strenuously resists. However, he does argue that ideas are the main motors of change in human cultures and one can see that as a driver behind technological innovation beginning in the human mind.

His analysis of change goes back to the Greeks with Heraclitus and Parmenides, then looking at the thought of Augustine and more recently of Bergson, Marx and Darwin. There is a chapter on culture in other species such as chimpanzees, elephants and dolphins. The author covers very thoroughly the variety of cultural evolution models on offer, pointing out the shortcomings in each. One can appreciate his observation that cultures can make self-destructive adjustments in their relationships with the environment, as we are currently doing - which hardly represents an evolutionary advance. The chapter on the imaginative animal contains the essence of his argument, that we draw on memory and anticipation as well as imagination in framing new possibilities. The current acceleration of change results from the enormous exchange of ideas that is now possible. It is also clear that we will need new and serviceable ideas applied to the unprecedented challenges that we now face. This is a stimulating and wide-ranging read.

**The Note from Heaven****Githa Ben-David***Watkins 2016, 252 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

This unusual book is how to sing yourself to higher consciousness, liberating your true voice and reconnecting with your higher Self. The title refers to the tonal expression of the divine state that we all have within us in this vibrational universe. The I is likened to a flute, which is nothing in itself but through which the wind can sound. The first part gives detailed instructions about how to establish contact with the note from heaven, which is likely to be close to A. It also explains the function of the chakras and the importance of breathing. Surrender is a key part of the process. The book then moves onto the practice of singing and creative music making. The second book is a manual for singing yourself free through what the author calls regressive cell-singing as a means of dissolving blockages. She points out that the Christian psychology of sin, shame, fear and guilt have imposed a collective trauma on the West and shaped the pain body with its four primary feelings that I am not good enough, that I don't want to be here, that I'm not allowed to be here and that I don't belong here. The practice of the book is demanding, and the author recommends an hour a day of singing, so prospective readers will need to make a real commitment. Having said this, the book provides a comprehensive route map.

**Memoirs of the Bright Side of the Moon****Ginger Gilmour***Angelscript 2015, 635 pp., no price given, h/b.*

Ginger Gilmour is an artist and sculptor who trained with Cecil Collins and is totally devoted to the quest for and expression of beauty and love, as the odyssey of her life shows. Her journey takes a sudden turning with the advent of Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour in her life and she sets off for England from Michigan to forge a new life. Much time is spent on the road in different parts of the world and in raising a family, but David eventually leaves and she is left to plough her own furrow while developing as an artist and mystic. The Sufi mystic Irina Tweedie becomes an important influence in her life as does Jungian Dr Gerhard Adler. The book is illustrated with photos of her exquisite sculptures that are a tribute to the sense of beauty that inspires her - and not in terms of outer appearance but rather from inward significance as an expression of her spiritual journey. Her studio becomes a sanctuary where she creates and reflects the beauty of life as the title suggests - on the bright side of the moon. It is an inspiring tale of courage and artistic integrity.

**Feng Shui – Hay House Basics****Davina Mackail***Hay House 2016, 229 pp., £8.99, p/b.*

Many readers will be familiar with the term *feng shui* but know little about its history and practical implications. This book serves as an ideal introduction in terms of both theory and practice, making one see one's house with its contents and spaces in a new way. One realises how we are affected by our surroundings, and what we can do about it. The properties and movement of *chi* are central and one can readily understand the distinction between beneficial and harmful *chi* - the latter stagnating in dark corners and accumulating in blocked passages. The balance of Yin and Yang is also very important as its balance in one's life more generally. The chapter on clutter and clearing it out is worth the price of the book on its own. The author regards it as the most important section of the book. She identifies a number of familiar excuses for not getting rid of clutter, such as that the object might come in useful, it was a gift, I've had it for a long time, it may be worth money in a few years, and it just needs fixing. She gives a clutter checklist that readers will find all-too-familiar! She also helps one remember where this all is. As we all know, clutter is steeped in emotional attachment, and emotions may create resistance to letting it go. Having just cleared out some stuff from our storage room, I know how liberating it feels - although there is always more clutter accumulating!

**The Master Communicator's Handbook****Teresa Erickson and Tim Ward (SMN)***Changemaker Books (John Hunt) 2015, 172 pp., £8.99, p/b.*

Widely endorsed by senior industry and NGO clients with whom they have worked, this book delivers its title with a great deal of practical advice and valuable illustration. We are all capable of becoming better communicators, and this book shows you how. The six sections deal with communicating ideas, communicating with authority, answering questions, creating connection, changing minds and leadership communications. A particular focus is people who want to change the world, which is addressed specifically in the last section, partly with a triangle featuring dissatisfaction, urgency and hope in order to create motivation to change. They think that messages should be concise, concrete, connected and catchy, and show how best to structure presentations and use body language to good effect. Sometimes, as they show in a chapter on micro-messages, body language contradicts the message but it contains the essence of the communication. In terms of persuasion, it is important to understand the nature of frames as mental structures and how best to modify these. Essential reading for those who want to communicate, influence and inspire.

**Character Nation****Jonathan Birdwell, Ralph Scott, Louis Reynolds***Demos 2015, 104 pp., £10, p/b – downloadable from [www.demos.org](http://www.demos.org)*

Character education is a fast moving field with the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham at the forefront. James Arthur and his colleagues have proved very influential across political parties, and the current Secretary of State for Education, Nicky Morgan, is a strong supporter. In this short report, the Jubilee Centre teams up with Demos to produce an introductory overview of the field with special emphasis on character education policy in England. The report makes extensive recommendations in terms of embedding the development of character in the educational system. This also entails reforming the Inspectorate and supporting teachers so that initial teacher training covers the delivery of character development and moral reflection. Although much government thinking focuses on the so-called performance virtues involving such characteristics as grit and resilience, the Jubilee Centre highlights the importance moral virtues to underpin these. There is no doubt that interest in the field is expanding internationally, as witnessed by the attendance at the annual Jubilee conference in Oxford in January. The report is an important step towards the idea of a character nation.

**Working with Truth****Murray (Nick) Nicholls (SMN)***Free download on <http://bit.ly/RMGceE>*

Subtitled 'communications with intelligences beyond individual physical consciousness', this book chronicles Nick's journey, full of improbable meetings and synchronicities conveying the strong impression of other intelligences at work behind the scenes. Many experiences have led him to the conviction that many individuals continue to be conscious after death in a frequency range not normally perceivable. Here communication is based on thoughts, images and emotions, and may include dreams and their interpretation. This also implies that we co-create our reality. Among the

most interesting themes in this book are Nick's encounters in connection with First World War graves. His companion on one occasion was given a number of names that they subsequently found in a war cemetery. On a subtle level, Nick is able to help spirits move on and also seems to have been involved in the same way with Afghan veterans, who do not realise they have died. The most remarkable incident concerns poems that he received that seem to have been influenced by Wilfred Owen. One particular moving reflection ends with the line 'May light renew these bodies, healed, when truth and death, will be revealed. It turned out that there is an inscription on Owen's grave running 'Shall life renew these bodies? Of a truth all death will he annul.' From this brief description, readers can appreciate that they may have to fasten their seat belts when reading this account.

**Manifestations of Mind in Matter****Ilebele Abel***ICRL 2008, 153 pp., \$19.95, p/b.*

Ilebele Abel is a Dutch artist whose visual art and music is in dialogue with developments in consciousness research. This book presents a number of conversations about art, science and spirit as we come to terms with our new understanding based on modern science. Participants include Bob Jahn and Brenda Dunne, Roger Nelson, philosopher Hans Gerding, parapsychologist Dick Bierman and biophysicist Roeland van Wijk. This is already an indication of the scope of discussions across boundaries and these are based on perception, perspectives and thinking about these, for instance in terms of images and metaphors, forms and structures. In that sense, the metanarrative embraces these various fields and seeks out their commonality and ways in which we can expand our own understanding. The discussions are accompanied by illustrations of Abel's art in a number of different styles. The questions raised about spirituality, consciousness, subjectivity, time, causality and coherence may not be susceptible to a full answer but these stimulating dialogues invite the reader to consider things from various points of view incorporating both scientific and artistic perspectives.

“Twenty years from now you will be more  
disappointed by the things that you didn't  
do than by the ones you did do.  
So throw off the bowlines.  
Sail away from the safe harbor.  
Catch the trade winds in your sails.  
Explore. Dream. Discover”

*Mark Twain*