



books in brief

David Lorimer

SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Virus of the Mind

by Richard Brodie

Hay House Publishers 2009, 249 pp., £10.99, p/b.

A book about the science of memes, a term invented by Richard Dawkins and further popularised by Susan Blackmore. Besides the meme, the book is based on three other central concepts, namely the virus, evolution and evolutionary psychology. The author sees this new idea as the basis of the paradigm shift in that we can become aware of the memes shaping our thinking and disinfect ourselves against them, or, using an alternative metaphor, deprogram or reprogram ourselves. Memes are useful concept, but there is a tendency for writers to denigrate the memes of others while thinking they have the right ones or don't really need to deprogram themselves. It's a little like relativists not realising that the position is equally relative. And it so happens that in my copy, a whole block of text was printed upside down. I did at first wonder if this was a trick to help me change my memes.

Galileo Goes to Jail

by Ronald L Numbers (ed.)

Harvard University Press 2009, 302 pp., £20.95, h/b.

This book is the outcome of a project supported by the John Templeton Foundation and arising out of a meeting in 2007. It is a provocative and stimulating collection designed to refute what the editor regards as the greatest myth of all, namely that science and religion have been in constant conflict, as was originally suggested by two of the most famous books written on the subject in the mid-19th century by A.D White and J.W. Draper. Interestingly, nearly half of the contributors are atheist or agnostic, while the rest range across Christianity and other faiths. Each of the 25 chapters is phrased as a proposition beginning with 'that' - for instance that the mediaeval Christian Church suppressed the growth of science, that Copernicanism demoted humans from in the centre of the cosmos, that Catholics did not contribute to the scientific revolution, that Newton's mechanistic cosmology eliminated the need for God, that Huxley defeated Wilberforce in their debate over evolution and religion, and that quantum physics demonstrated the doctrine of free will. Readers will find themselves reacting differently to the various propositions, but the contributions far extremely well-informed and address a good many contentious questions. There is an extensive bibliography at the back.

Waking up in Time

by Peter Russell (SMN)

Cygnus Books 2009, 203 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Originally published in 1992 as *A White Hole in Time* and updated in 1998, this new edition contains a foreword by Ervin Laszlo and a new introduction by the author, but the text is substantially the same apart from the addition of some evocative black-and-white photos as chapter headings. Pete's thesis about the accelerating pace of life has been borne out, as has his fundamental diagnosis that we are living through a crisis of consciousness, thinking and values, which underlies the various challenges we face. Put succinctly, it is our current mode of consciousness that is unsustainable - we have a crisis of perception, which demands a spiritual renaissance, a plumbing of the depths of human consciousness as well as overcoming inertia and resistance to change. The book remains a brilliant analysis and roadmap towards awakening and bringing in a different kind of world.

Gaia and Climate Change: a Theology of Gift Events

by Anne Primavesi (SMN)

Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group 2009, 154 pp., £16.99, p/b.

A remarkable theological response to the crisis of climate change, following on from her earlier books on Gaia and theology. Anne's thesis is that Gaia theory has revolutionised our understanding of the relationship between humans and the environment and that we need a radical change of perception away from violent imperialist images of God and corresponding capitalist exploitation of nature. Specifically, she argues that 'we must confront the role that Christian violence-of-God traditions have played in causing the problems raised by climate change and justifying our part in them. Awareness of, and attention to, this state of affairs is a prerequisite for remedying it.'

Her new perspective opens up 'a non-violent, non-consumerist, generous, compassionate and inclusive theological vision that can be seen as emergent in the life of Jesus.' She analyses three key historic events suggested by Hannah Arendt: the discovery of America, the Reformation and the invention of the telescope. Theologically, this involves seeing the life and teachings of Jesus as a gift, and emphasising not so much what he did for us ('dying for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures'), but rather what he said in terms of forgiveness and loving our enemies. This power of forgiveness must be mobilised by us individually and collectively as we reach towards a new understanding of our embeddedness within natural processes and evolve a new form of economic system beyond short-term monetary profit driving consumption and waste. Essential reading for those seeking a new and sustainable theology of nature.

Flow

by Philip Ball

Oxford University Press 2009, 190 pp., £14.99, h/b.

This is the second of three books on nature's patterns, and some of the remarks I made about the first volume also apply to this one, notably that the format could have been greatly improved as a coffee table book with more colour illustrations. The point of departure of this book is Leonardo, whose drawings are illustrated. The author applies the same principles to fluids, grains and the movements of animals and people. There are chapters on water, sand dunes and the movement of large numbers of people or animals, with many illustrations and diagrams. Two notable omissions in this otherwise comprehensive book are Otto Schwenk and his Anthroposophical followers like John Wilkes, and the work of Viktor Schauberger. These three people bring a much more dynamic and living approach to the subject, trying to understand the nature of water not only from the outside, but also through identification with its processes. In other words a qualitative rather than a purely quantitative approach.

MEDICINE/HEALTH

The Vitamin D Revolution

by Soram Khalsa, M.D.

Hay House Publishers 2009, £5.99, p/b.

Endorsed by both Dr Christiane Northrup and Arianna Huffington, this is an important book giving the reader an update on the status of Vitamin D research and its implications for public health. Vitamin D deficiency

is now connected with 17 varieties of cancer, heart disease and various other diseases of civilisation, which is an important message in a society obsessed with screening out the sun. The author found that 75% of his patients in California had insufficient levels, so that one can imagine that this diagnosis would be replicated in this country. The book provides an overview of how our understanding has evolved, the role of Vitamin D in the body, illnesses associated with Vitamin D deficiency and how to optimise Vitamin D levels. An important book for both practitioners and general readers.

Exposed

by Mark Schapiro

Chelsea Green Publishing Company 2007, 216 pp., \$16.95, p/b.

Subtitled 'The toxic chemistry of everyday products and what's at stake for American power', this powerful book shows that much of the world is now following the lead and the higher health and environmental standards developed by the EU. A significant intellectual difference is that Europeans have adopted a precautionary interpretation of new science, seeking to prevent harm before it happens, even if there is some uncertainty involved. Americans, on the other hand, have prioritised economics, but, paradoxically, this has led to a huge loss of foreign markets, as corn exports have plummeted from 3.15 million metric tons in 1996 to a mere 33,000 metric tons in 2005; Schapiro observes that this decline has tracked the rise of genetically engineered food in the US food system. American companies now find themselves obliged to adopt European standards if they want to reach desirable export markets. It is no longer enough to have powerful lobbyists in Brussels. Such interference would certainly not be tolerated if European politicians were to visit Washington to lobby against a bill being considered by Congress. Moreover, there are very serious issues to be addressed with the gradual build-up of toxic chemicals in the human body, which may well be partly related to the obesity crisis. Ultimately, human health must come before economic growth.

Light in Life - Medical to Mystical

by Dr Susan Jamieson M.D. (SMN)

Fantasy Printing 2008, 165 pp., p/b.

Susan Jamieson has written a lively book explaining a new way of understanding ourselves as 'light' beings, reminding us that the food we eat is condensed light and that the universe itself is made of light. By this she means more than physical light, asserting that the light of God, which is also experienced as love, is the all-pervading ground substance of the universe. These ideas will be familiar to many readers, as is her encouragement to heal ourselves before we think of healing the planet. She discusses light research in biology, the origin of colour and vision and its use in healing. At this point, she brings in the first of a series of 24 exercises using the languages both of Indian chakras and Chinese Qi and gradually widening into a connection with Universal Light. A book that will appeal both to the wider medical community and to the general reader.

PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION

God & Work

by Brian Keeble

Deep Books 2009, 114 pp., \$19.95, p/b.

Brian Keeble has been the publisher of many books on perennial philosophy. Here he argues that the world of work requires a fundamental realignment if it is to harness 'the truth, beauty, and goodness that are at the root of our deepest intuitions. In a series of chapters including such figures as AK Coomaraswamy, Eric Gill, William Blake and the lesser-known figures of WR Lethaby and Edward Johnston, and the reader is likely to reflect on the underlying nature of work, craft and art as expressions of the spirit. I found the chapter on Eric Gill of particular interest, as he was a friend and mentor of my uncle Hew, who was also a sculptor and letter cutter. Gill criticised the ethos of modern industrial society and sought to reinstate the dignity of work and the centrality of beauty.

The Life and Times of Rudolf Steiner, Vol 2

by Emil Bock

Floris Books 2009, 240 pp., £16.99, p/b.

This second volume by the founder of the Christian Community must be the most comprehensive account of the life of Rudolf Steiner and is underpinned by the author's own considerable historical and philosophical scholarship. He sees the historic mission of Steiner to raise the power of intelligence into spiritual heights, transcending the prevalent materialism of our times, while at the same time not renouncing the critical edge of science. For those who are not familiar with the idea, there is an interesting discussion of Steiner's claim to have been the reincarnation of both Aristotle and Aquinas, considering the important advances that each brought with them. This must be the definitive biography.

Is there a Christian Case for Assisted Dying?

by Paul Badham

SPCK 2009, 144 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Paul Badham is a theologian who has been running courses on death and dying at Lampeter in Wales for over 20 years. In this book he makes a Christian case for voluntary euthanasia, which is supported by around 80% of the general public, but by far fewer theologians. He explains why these issues have become so critical and gives some personal background relating to deaths in his own family. He puts forward various perspectives, including the absolutist and consequentialist, asking if suicide necessarily implies ingratitude towards God and discussing both the relevance of the question and the problem of suffering. The arguments are carefully put throughout the book. One distinguishing feature is Badham's understanding of near death experiences, ignored by many theologians, but which can at one level illuminate the Christian hope. This book complements the subtle arguments put forward by Mary Warnock and Elizabeth McDonald's *Easeful Death*, a book which I reviewed in the last issue. Both are essential contributions to the ongoing debate.

Dharamsala Diaries

by Swati Chopra

Penguin/Viking Books 2009, 277 pp., Rs295, p/b.

Described as 'a travelogue of the spirit', this beautifully written and exquisitely observed book tells the story of this place of pilgrimage where the Dalai Lama is based, and indeed some of the narrative recounts proceedings at his exchanges with neuroscientists, who do not always understand the inner aspect of spiritual life. The book moves through many levels - encounters, conversations, descriptions, philosophical reflections on life and the spiritual path, and observations on practical matters. All this brings the place and its people alive, recreating the journey and its questions in the reader. It is a remarkable evocation not only of Dharamasala but also of the spirit of India.

Mystikos

by Michael Scott (SMN)

Fisher King Publishing 2009, 293 pp., p/b.

The title of this book means mystery, the mystery of existence itself and of our experience, which, at its most profound, is indescribable. The author explains that he is a rationalist and a sceptic, but at the same time he has experienced other forms of reality since his childhood fishing expeditions in Gloucestershire. In a transparent series of essays the author recounts elements of his life and insights, tying these in with some of his own paintings. His characterisation of his experiences resonates with other descriptions. He writes that he feels removed from the immediate, mundane world, while remaining aware of it and at the same time experiencing strong connection to other living things, which is usually suffused with powerful emotions and a sense of belonging. This does not mean that he loses sight of the everyday. Far from it, as he describes various difficult internal states and outer situations. He tries to remain true to his experience without allowing it to ossify into a belief system. The tone is informal and conversational, so that one has the impression of knowing the author by the end of the book. Not that he has resolved the mystery of existence, but rather that he has shared something precious from which the reader can be nurtured.

Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements

by Peter B. Clarke

Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group 2006, 686 pp., £26.99, p/b.

An amazing resource for students and those interested in the scope and impact of new religious movements. The coverage is worldwide, with 300 entries not only on the movements themselves, but also on broader classification such as the new age movement, cyberspace religions and the whole brainwashing debate. A more general feature is inner-directed spirituality based on contact with the Self and postulating that self transformation is essential for a more general social transformation. An unusual feature is articles on literature in different languages. There are entries on a great many individuals as well as techniques, groups and concepts. In view of its scope, it is surprising that Peter Deunov (Beinsa Douno) and the Bulgarian White Brotherhood does not feature. However, this is a small quibble in view of the scope and depth of coverage. The reader should also note that much of the coverage is descriptive rather than critical, like the entry on the Aetherius Society. However, this leaves the field open for further critical investigation by the reader, since there are simply too many choices and judgements that would have had to be made.

Paul Tillich, Carl Jung and the Recovery of Religion

by John P. Dourley

Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group 2008, 208 pp., £21.99, p/b.

Many readers will be familiar with the work of Tillich and Jung, as well as being concerned with the recovery of religion and spirituality in our time. The writer wrote a thesis on the former and trained as a Jungian analyst 30 years ago. As such he is uniquely placed to write such a book. His starting point is that both these thinkers identified the origins of religious experience in the depth of the human being, leading to what he calls a radical immanence as the basis for an emerging religious universalism. A pivotal chapter contrasts the trinity of Tillich with the quaternity of Jung (4 represents wholeness), but the approach of both men was concerned with the coincidence of opposites and the integration of polarities. Another common theme is a critique of the purely scientific and technological mindset which uproots us from our own depth. This is not a book for the beginner, but rather a rich reflection on parallel themes from these two great thinkers.

How Long is Now?

by Tim Freke

Hay House Publishers 2009, 230 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Tim Freke styles himself as a stand-up philosopher, entertaining his audiences as well as enlightening them with the fruits of his experience. In this book he relates his own journey, interspersed with more general insights about waking up to oneness and immersion in what he calls the 'big love', which he first experienced when he was 12. The narrative alternates between the everyday and universal principles, between consciousness as separate and awareness as the one I, in which we are 'deep awake.' The reader will recognise much of the thinking, but in life itself it is harder to stay in the oneness and in the now. Besides, reading is not experience, so no book can be more than second-hand report perhaps able to trigger this state. There is a very good conversation with Ramesh Balsekar, a teacher of non-duality who used to be President of the Bank of India. Paradoxically, he discovers that there is no time to be enlightened, because all is one already. However, there is always further to go, the mystery of the moment is ever present. A very engaging as well as illuminating book.

Writing in the Sand -**Jesus and the Soul of the Gospels**

by Thomas Moore

Hay House Publishers 2009, 163 pp., \$22.95, p/b.

Thomas Moore, well-known for his book *Care of the Soul*, takes a new view of the Gospels and life of Jesus through his study of original Greek texts, including non-canonical Gospels. He argues that the gospel message does not belong to any church or community, and that Jesus's purpose was not to form a religion

but to transform the world. He sums up his view in the four Greek words *metanoia*, *basileia*, *agape* and *therapeia*, or 'change of heart brings you into the kingdom where you discover the power of love to heal.' He sees the miracle at Cana of water into wine as representing a deep change from plain unconsciousness to an intoxicating vision. For him, as for many of us, wine is a symbol for the deep pleasures of life. Jesus emerges as a man embracing life, including its physical side as Moore discusses the status and role of Mary Magdalene. In some respects, we surely see Jesus in our own image. For Moore, this means cultivating deep respect, dealing with demonic urges in oneself and society, and playing the role of the healer in every situation. It is an inspiring vision and one that can help to renew the Christian impulse.

PSYCHOLOGY/PARAPSYCHOLOGY**Personality Types**

by Elizabeth Puttick PhD (SMN)

Hay House Publishers 2009, 327 pp., £8.99, p/b.

A stimulating book exploring a system of seven personality types: King, Priest, Warrior, Scholar, Sage, Artisan and Server. The reader begins by taking a test to see if they agree with a number of statements characteristic of the various types. One is likely to score much more highly on one than the others, with perhaps two in second place. This enables you to read in detail not only about your predominant personality type, but also about the others and how to relate to them. It is an interesting exercise in self-awareness, as no individual will fit exactly into a formula. One also becomes aware of the extent to which characteristics are acquired or intrinsic. A structure is applied to each of the types, which have positive and negative polarities. In addition, one can apply various perspectives to the types, each of which is described in terms of leadership and communication style, and how people relate as parents, in love and at work. A worthwhile map to study in order to make the most of one's capacity.

The View: Mind over Matter, Heart over Mind

by Dave Patrick (ed)

Polair Publishing 2009, 288 pp., £11.99, p/b.

Published for the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, this volume centres on his contribution to humanity's spiritual advancement through the works he wrote on spiritualism later on in life and on ostensible communications after his death. His two key principles can be summed up as personal responsibility and the redeeming power of love. As the book unfolds, it goes far beyond the legacy of Conan Doyle, touching on spirituality, empowerment and health, nature and community, sustainable business leadership and even 2012. The subtitle is a good indication of the 'vital message' of the book, mind over matter, heart over mind. Sometimes there is a tendency for some authors to polarise heart and mind when they need to work together. For me, the most powerful contribution was an extract from Neale Donald Walsch reminding us of the perils of what he calls separation theology, separation psychology, separation cosmology, and separation sociology leading to separation pathology. He reminds us that change is not a disruption, but rather an eruption, life erupting into fuller bloom as a self-sustaining system. The only caveat is that separation or individualisation is an aspect of our being and experience expressed by Arthur Koestler as the holon, which is both a whole and part. So separation is not to be denied but is part of the dance of life.

Neuroscience, Psychology and Religion

by Malcolm Jeeves & Warren S. Brown

Templeton Foundation Press 2009, 160 pp., £17.95, p/b.

This unusual book is a collaboration between two neuropsychologists who are also Christians. They give an overview of various aspects of the field, including science and religion, how the soul became the mind, the mind-brain relationship, evolutionary psychology and the neuroscience of religious experience. All these concepts are clearly explained, and the underlying view of the authors is one that combines emergence and non-reductive physicalism or dual-aspect monism. In other words, they eschew any form of dualism

as outdated. In theological terms, this means embracing a Hebrew rather than a Platonic understanding of the nature of personality, so that spirituality is both embedded and embodied. This model works well when applied to conventional research areas, but arguably has less explanatory power when dealing with phenomena such as near-death experiences and evidence for survival of consciousness, which questions the contention that the mental and spiritual aspects of ourselves 'are nested in, and dependent upon, our bodily systems.'

Soul Power

by Anne Baring (SMN) and Scilla Elworthy

BookSurge 2009, 59 pp., £10.00, p/b.

Offering 'an agenda for a conscious humanity', this powerful, short and evocatively illustrated book sums up the current human situation and offers a way through to a new understanding and corresponding political system. The authors understand that the crisis of our times is basically a spiritual one, and that we need to learn to see life as one, with each of us participating and belonging to a greater whole. They describe the limiting beliefs we hold and features of scientific materialism, as well as those of a new and integrated worldview. They remind us of the power of fairy tales, that our beliefs are rooted in fear and that we have as yet been unable to move beyond war in our quest for security. A key task is the rebalancing of head and heart, or the integration of the masculine and feminine aspects of our being. They help us imagine a new kind of world with new values and a new political agenda. The vision is there, it is now up to us to embody it by being the change we want to see in the world. I hope that this book will be very widely read

The Uncommon Path of Awakening Authentic Joy

by Mick Quinn

O Books 2009, 441 pp., £14.95, p/b.

It was a surprise to find the maxims of La Rochefoucauld appearing at the head of each chapter of this book, not having read them for over 30 years. The book takes a conversational format, with what the author calls brief evolutionary pointers in text boxes. Thus it can be read at two levels. All the same, at 440 pages, I did feel it a little overwhelming. It draws on the work of Ken Wilber and is based on four central insights: renounce conditioned motives, reclaim your consciousness, recall your origin of oneness and relate as your full potential. The themes are interspersed with illustrated personal stories and there is a useful set of exercises on aligning values with the awakened life. The overall direction is going beyond the ego and reintegrating into real sense of oneness and a call to conscious service. The scope of the book is personal and interpersonal rather than social, focusing on individual transformation, which is only part of the picture, albeit an important one.

FUTURE STUDIES/ECONOMICS/ ECOLOGY

Future Scenarios

by David Holmgren

Green Books 2009, 127 pp., £9.95, p/b.

This book is about how communities can adapt to peak oil and climate change. Unless we have some unexpected breakthrough, fossil energy is going to become scarcer and more expensive to extract. The main part of the book presents four different scenarios of energy descent and climate change, depending on whether the oil decline is slow or fast, climate change rapid or gradual. None of these present easy choices but they do help the reader think them through.

Money & Soul

by Per Espen Stoknes

Green Books 2009, 296 pp., £12.95, p/b.

With a foreword by Jonathon Porritt, this is an important book by a Norwegian organisational psychologist and management consultant. It is particularly relevant to reflections on the implications of the credit crunch and the relationship between the two elements of the title, money

and soul. The ambitious agenda of the book is the transformation of capitalism into a new form which he calls polycapitalism, where equal weight is given to natural, social, manufactured and financial capital, with corresponding markets and forms of money. There is much of historical and psychological interest in the book concerning the origins of money itself, markets, accounts, credit, debt and interest. It also contributes a new model of welfare, incorporating work and love along with money, self-respect and close relationships to produce real quality of life. The author disposes of four powerful economic myths concerning price, utility and profit maximisation, but especially the idea that economic growth is primary.

We need to move beyond the tunnel vision of what he calls the economism to a more adequate model of human aspiration in relation to economics. Much of the thinking is very new, and the reader can appreciate the necessity of radical thought, including the invention of climate change currency, treating carbon quotas as money. He deals with potential objections to his ideas, suggesting that soul and money can come together in polycapitalism in ways that integrate quality and quantity. He even reminds us that the father of modern economics, Alfred Marshall, insisted that the economist must concern himself with the ultimate aims of man rather than simply the maximisation of consumption or utility. It would be good to see this book on a university reading list to stimulate some new thinking and remind students that, 'for the soul, the aesthetic is an existential necessity.' A remark that some modern architects would also do well to remember.

time's up!

by Keith Farnish

Green Books, 256 pp., £9.95, p/b.

The author of this original book in diagnosis our situation as one where 'we have to choose between the short-term greed of industrial civilisation over long-term survival that humans are capable of.' Paradoxically, 'we seem prepared to die in order to live a life that is killing us.' The first part of the book explains our ecological situation on different scales, beginning with the virus and working up to trees. This gives a series of interesting perspectives, including the dangers to human health from the way in which viruses operate on large, densely packed populations of animals. This creates a link between our livestock systems and our own health, as we are discovering. Farnish postulates three selfviews about the relationship between humans and the earth: that we are a vital component, that we are part of life, and that we are of little relevance to the rest of life.

He then discusses these in terms of three tests, ecological, cultural and personal. How we relate in these three ways is critical; clearly, the value of humans to other humans is hugely significant. The major theme of the rest of the book is connection, and reasons why we have become disconnected. He lists 10 tools of disconnection characteristic of our current industrial system, which he thinks will eventually fail in a catastrophic manner. Making the necessary changes involves different ways of living and actively engaging in transformative activities and even creating what he calls an eco-meme explaining why we are in our current situation and how we can emerge from it by cultivating certain skills and going beyond industrial civilisation.

Here for our Children's Children

by Adrian C Armstrong

Imprint Academic 2009, 122 pp., £8.95, p/b.

The author of this very useful book is both a hydrologist and a priest in The Church of England who teaches environmental ethics at Birmingham University. The book cleverly bridges the general reader and the university student, both of whom will find much food for thought. It begins with some definitions of different modes of ethics and their approaches, moving on to the historical origins of environmental ethics. The most important chapter discusses different ways of valuing the environment in terms of hedonism, utilitarianism, consequential values of stewardship and sustainability, environmental rights, intrinsic value, extrinsic value and Gaia as a form of theistic Earth ethics. This is followed by illustrations of environmental ethics and practice applied to such issues as human population and climate change. The author ends with a personal statement, which has much in common with the recent Dimpleby Lecture by the Prince of Wales, pointing out that we need to come to terms with population planning, create a low carbon lifestyle, restructure the world economy and address poverty and deprivation. A tall but necessary order.

Earth in the Balance

by Al Gore

Earthscan Ltd 2009, 408 pp., p/b.

I reviewed this book when it first came out in 1992, since when Al Gore has been vice president of the United States and has become a leading crusader in the campaign against global warming. No doubt most readers of this publication will have seen his film. Subtitled 'forging a common purpose', and revised in 2000, this new edition contains an updated foreword entitled 'the coming environmental decade.' Gore remarks that new scientific research has greatly strengthened our grasp of the basics: 'global warming is real, it is getting worse rapidly, it is mainly caused by human beings, we need to act now to avoid the worst of its consequences - and it is not too late.' We know that we have radically transformed the relationship between humankind and the earth, but our focus on short-term thinking and instant gratification 'has led to a systematic exclusion of long-term consequences in our decisions and policies.' This puts us on a collision course with the earth. However, as we know, the necessary political will has not yet been mobilised. This book is a brilliant analysis of the larger context of our situation, and is as relevant now as when it was first published.

Unnatural Selection

by Peter Healey and Steve Rayner

Earthscan Ltd 2009, 273 pp., £39.95, h/b.

This book arises from a conference held at the James Martin Institute in Oxford, and has the unfortunate subtitle: 'the challenges of engineering tomorrow's people.' The notion of engineering is mechanistic and behaviourist, lending a false sense of precision to the human being. Of course, nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science offer possibilities of enhancing human performance, lengthening life span and reshaping our inherited physical, cognitive and emotional identities. The editors realise that this entails risks and complex choices as well as fundamental ethical issues. In addition, these developments are deeply divisive and raised deeper questions about what it really means to be human. Much depends on whether the orientation of your definition is internal or external. For most people in our society, it is the latter, as it is for science.

There is much stimulating material from a variety of perspectives asking if we can live longer, become stronger, smarter and happier at the same time as developing more just and governable social structures. However, I did find a major disconnect in the postscript written by Peter Schwartz looking back from 2050. By focusing solely on technological developments, he ignores the very real ecological, agricultural and sociological issues that we now face. It is not clear whether he thinks these have also been solved, but the impression is one of a brave new world in which science has enhanced our capacities and we have 'mastered in our evolution.' Where is the discussion on the health implications of the obesity epidemic, which is set to increase? Where is the understanding that health arises more from the natural lifestyle than from pharmacological interventions? And it is presumed that only in 2050 is oil beginning to run out. It would have been good if this discussion had been set within the wider social and ecological context and informed by the programme at the same Institute being run by Sir Crispin Tickell.

A Short History of the Future:**Surviving the 2030 Spike**

by Colin Mason

Earthscan Ltd 2009, 306 pp., £14.99.

The author of what the BBC rightly calls 'a good, all-round primer on the state of the planet' was an Australian Senator for nine years, serving on the parliamentary standing committee for science and the environment. Incredibly well-informed and wide ranging, the book is divided into four parts. The first looks at the main drivers in terms of energy, population and poverty, climate, food and water. The second looks at the directions in which science, business and finance are travelling. Mason sees the six main drivers combining dangerously in the decade from 2030, arguing that the history of the future will be profoundly affected by the way in which we deal with these drivers in the next 20 years. He comments that there is little evidence have been understood by policymakers and financiers,

whose focus is predominantly short term. The author presents the relevant facts bluntly but always with a view to taking positive action, as reflected in a box entitled 'optimal future history' at the end of each chapter.

He is not the first to point out that the diversion of a small proportion of arms expenditure would be sufficient to resolve many of our problems, but this requires a fundamental shift in thinking, away from separation to oneness, from nationalism to global consciousness, involving what he calls an upgrading of the individual. This naturally has implications for the way we educate our children and requires genuine new thinking on the part of academics. The final chapter brings all the threads together, describing the world which is likely if we continue with business as usual, before suggesting key policy objectives. As a politician, Mason puts forward two basic axioms for real change: that useful change is likely to come only if it can provide an equally obvious and general benefit (otherwise resistance will overcome it) and that proposed solutions must take the lowest common denominators of human nature realistically into account. So here you have a well-informed and realistic analysis and a blueprint for action. But will we have to wait for a systemic crisis before the necessary action is taken?

The Roots of Sustainability

by David Cadman

Prince's Foundation 2009, 46 pp., p/b.

This is one of a series of essays commissioned by The Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment with a foreword by the Prince of Wales himself. He hopes that the reader will contemplate the need for a 'grammar' for making places that can be understood and loved by people for hundreds of years to come. In this short book, David Cadman looks at three vital philosophical components, harmony, beauty and love, starting with some of the Prince's own words and demonstrating how these terms interrelate. He also illustrates his points with some sacred geometry and photos of Poundbury. By the end of the book, the reader has a more profound understanding of the principles upon which sustainability is based and which reflect our ancient Greek heritage.

EDUCATION**Arena of Ambition**

by Stephen Parkinson

Cambridge University Press 2009, 418 pp., £25.00, h/b.

With a foreword by HRH the Prince of Wales, this is an instructive and entertaining history of the Cambridge Union by a former President who is now working in the Conservative Central Office and who will no doubt emerge as an MP, as have so many of his predecessors. The Prince recalls speaking in a debate that 'This house believes that technological advance threatens individuality of man and is becoming his master', a theme to which he has often returned. Cambridge graduates will find the book of special sentimental interest, while the general reader will be entertained by the many recollections by prominent public figures such as Douglas Hurd, Sir John Nott, Michael Howard, Norman Lamont and Arianna Huffington. An appendix gives a complete list of officers since 1815, among which one finds many distinguished names in many fields other than politics, including Bishop Barnes and the philosopher Henry Sidgwick.

GENERAL**Osama Bin Laden Dead or Alive?**

by David Ray Griffin

Olive Branch Press 2009, 102 pp., \$15.00.

As readers will probably recall, David Ray Griffin is a philosopher of religion who has written a series of books questioning the official interpretation of 9/11. Here he turns his forensic powers to the question of whether or not Osama bin Laden is dead. The general impression one gets from the media is that he is still alive and that the Americans are still seeking him out. However, this book

conveys a very different view, setting out evidence that he died in late 2001 and that all purported communications since that time have been fabricated. Some of the video and audio tapes are pretty clearly fraudulent, such as one showing 'bin Laden' writing with his right hand when it is known that he was left-handed. Signals from his mobile phone ceased in December 2001. Griffin also analyses the discrepancies between his initial statement denying any involvement in 9/11 and later tapes asserting his central role. It seems likely that the intelligence services and governments deliberately distorted the situation in order to pursue political objectives embodied in the so-called war on terror. It's a pity that this issue does not seem to be a subject for public debate, but this book gives readers the necessary background information to reach their own conclusions.

The Profit

by John Karter (SMN)

Roast Books 2009, 96 pp., £5.99, p/b.

Many readers will be familiar with Kahlil Gibran's *Prophet*, which is almost essential reading in order to understand this brilliant parody and satire on the financial world. Piers Black is the ultimate charismatic tycoon 'revered by men and universally desired by women, a legend in his own Armani suit', and has his own ruthless and calculating message to deliver to a packed audience of shareholders. He speaks in turn on a variety of topics suggested by members of the audience such as profit, greed, mobile phones, work, adversity and even accountants, takeovers, clothes (you are what you wear), cars, sex and money. When it comes to love, the text is the greatest travesty of and contrast with Gibran: 'Love brings powerless confusion to those whose purpose and direction was as unshakeable as a mountain.' Piers sees love as a monstrous web and maintains that the greatest love of all is self-love. Just as he reaches a peak of eloquent rhetoric, the voice of his father rings across the hall, asking him what has become of 'the time to be kind and long-suffering and loving and generous.' This incident creates a crisis from which he makes a nearly full recovery, reverting to his self-assured arrogance. This is a great book to take on holiday and will surely make you laugh out loud as someone asks enquiringly 'speak to us of cars' and Piers launches forth with soaring metaphors and high-flown but utterly cynical prose.

Buy Ology

by Martin Lindstorm

Random House Publishing Group Ltd 2009, 240 pp., £8.99, p/b.

Written by a brand expert who commissioned the research himself, this book serves as an introduction to what is called neuromarketing. Buyology is defined as the subconscious thoughts, feelings and desires that drive the purchasing decisions we all make. His approach is that we as consumers need to know these findings so as better to understand ourselves and our reactions, including a good deal of irrational behaviour. Among the startling findings is the fact that not only do the warnings on the back of cigarette packs have no effect on suppressing the craving to smoke, they actually stimulate an area of the brain known as the *nucleus accumbens*, otherwise known as the craving spot. When stimulated, this part of the brain requires higher and higher doses to get a fix, which has clear implications for addictions of all kinds. A chapter on mirror neurons reveals how strongly they drive our behaviour, predicting that advertisers will find more ways to play on this to make us buy. Moreover, the strongest brands like iPod and Ferrari register the same brain patterns as religious images, and visual imagery is more effective and memorable when coupled with another sense like sound and smell, thus leading to fuller emotional engagement. One additional worrying feature is the effectiveness of fear in influencing behaviour, as we have come to appreciate in our political systems. However, the knowledge deployed in this book is the best antidote we can have to ever more sophisticated manipulation.

The State of the World Atlas

by Dan Smith

Earthscan Ltd 2009, 144 pp., £12.99, p/b.

This is an invaluable graphic survey of current events and global trends divided into seven sections: who we are, wealth and power, war and peace, rights and respect, health of the people, health of

the planet, and vital statistics, including indicators of well-being. The introduction gives an overview of the contents, pointing out that the total world population of 9 billion by 2050 will contain a vast and greater proportion of older people. Indeed, in the working age population will only increase from 4.1 billion to 4.14 billion, a figure that has considerable implications. The format enables considerable contrasts to be highlighted. For instance, an analysis of malnutrition is immediately followed by one of obesity. It is very striking to find the progression of obesity in the United States just in the last 10 years. Whereas the figures for individual states were mainly between 10 and 19% in 1996, they are now almost all at 20 to 25% or more. Only Colorado and Massachusetts are still under 20%! The health of the planet is covered in a similar way, with a final section on warning signs about the effects of climate change. This is a book that should be in every school library.

My Restless Spirit

by Reg Grant (SMN)

Gazelle 2009, 279 pp., £20, h/b.

This book, part autobiography, part biography and part adventure and detective story, tells the remarkable story of how Reg Grant discovered who his grandfather was, and his process of transcending the materialistic perspective as a trained engineer and coming to a spiritual understanding of life. His own quest began at the age of 50 in 1975 when he read a book called *The Life Beyond Death* by Arthur Ford and began to realise that there was a great deal more to life. The pivotal moment in this story occurs in 2002 when he suddenly becomes aware of his grandmother, Lily, having wondered how he could find out more about her life. As she began to give him details, it emerges that she worked as a maid on an estate north of Ripon called Norton Conyers, which had been occupied by Lord Alwyne Compton, the third son of the Marquess of Northampton and his wife Lady Mary. It turned out that his father had been a lovechild born to Lord Alwyne and Lily. The story then unfolds, but it is important to note that none of this would have come to light without the original incarnate communication. Lily had been dead since 1936. In the last chapter, Reg writes about his own philosophy after coming to terms with the afterlife, about which he remarks that every ending is a new beginning. Interested readers can consult www.afterlifeexplorationsociety.com

Cecil Collins

by Brian Keeble

Golgonooza Press 2009, 54 pp., £20.00, p/b.

Subtitled 'the artist as writer and image maker', this short and fully illustrated book introduces the work of Cecil Collins (1908-1989) as one of the great visionary painters in the English mystical tradition. Collins believed that the true aim of art is to facilitate the spiritual impulse of the soul towards divine unity, hence his insistence that art is metaphysical, a contention which is also reflected in his poetry. The last chapter by Collins himself is entitled 'the anatomy of the fool', and provides a penetrating critique of modern times, reminding us that 'the only real progress is growth in wisdom.' This means that science is not wisdom, which in turn leads to the reflection that power in hands other than wisdom is destructive. The fool, says Collins, is the servant of the heart, which is the essential expression of life, and this can be more adequately expressed in paintings than words.

Blackness and the Dreaming Soul

by Cy Grant (SMN)

Shoving Leopard 2007, 215 pp., £14.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'Race, Identity and the Materialistic Paradigm', this autobiographical reflection is a real odyssey as the author has personally blazed a number of trails from his childhood through his experiences of being shot down in the Second World War, qualifying as a barrister, founding the first black arts centre in Britain, performing plays and working as a broadcaster. It is an extraordinary journey by any standards, all the more so for its insights as a participating observer of the dominant Western way of life. Cy brings a fresh perspective to the intrinsic limitations of a worldview based on duality, alienation, exploitation, greed and materialism. Building on his understanding of the Tao Te Ching, he proposes a harmonious philosophy of non-duality and human interconnectedness with nature. His holistic outlook is radically multicultural, and implies the new vision of mutual respect and

the end of Western monopoly on valid definitions of reality. He criticises in detail what he calls the seven pillars of the prevailing paradigm, suggesting that a true awareness of the unity of life will bring about radical change by going to the very root causes of our predicament. A truly liberating book.

From Stress to Success in Just 31 Days

by **Dr John F. Demartini**

Hay House Publishers 2009, 137 pp., £7.99, p/b.

John Demartini is an inspiring speaker who has made several recent appearances in London. In this book, he provides a simple step-by-step process over 31 days with practical tips for all departments of life, including prioritising activities, drinking water and eating light meals, expressing gratitude, clearing debris, sitting in silence and reading inspirational stories. This may all sound very straightforward, but reading is one thing and practice another, such is the power of inertia. Each chapter describes the activity, followed by practical action steps and corresponding affirmations in a format that can be used on a daily basis.

The Science of Family - Working with Ancestral Patterns

by **Nikki Mackay**

O Books 2009, 99 pp., £9.99, p/b.

The author's introduction to this field came in a workshop with Jill Purce in which she found herself plumbing hitherto unexplored dimensions of her relationship with her family. This led her to study the work of Bert Hellinger, to which Bart van der Lugt frequently referred, involving as it does considerable role playing. Her background as a medical physicist leads her to understand these influences in terms of an energetic imprint of ancestral patterns, for which she also finds parallels in the Tarot. There are some practical exercises and a chapter on clearing patterns through sound. A useful introduction to this important field.

The Power of Less

by **Leo Babauta**

Hay House Publishers 2009, 170 pp., £8.99, p/b.

At a time when our lives are becoming fuller and faster and we tend to accumulate more and more stuff, this book comes as a refreshing breath of air. It encourages readers to identify the essential and eliminate the rest, using six principles: set limitations, choose the essential, simplify, focus, create habits and start small. There is a wealth of practical advice about how to implement these principles in terms of time management, e-mails, Internet, filing, daily routine, decluttering workspace and taking up healthy habits. Many of the suggestions are easy to implement, but like all similar books, persistence and self-discipline are required to follow these through. This is certainly one of the best and most practical books of its kind.

Secrets of Planet Earth

by **Tony Neate (SMN)**

Eye of Gaza Press 2008, 229 pp., £10.99, p/b.

'H-A' is a being from an earlier epoch, who has been channelled by Tony Neate for 50 years. In this book, he gives an overview of the history and development of humanity from the earliest times to the present. In addition, various different planes of existence are defined, in which the Earth has its own place. There is a strong connection with Atlantean civilisation, which many believe self-destructed several thousand years ago, but some of the inhabitants migrated to initiate new civilisations such as Egypt. The role of Christ in this evolutionary process is explained, as well

as echoes of the Atlantean heritage in the science of manipulation prevalent in our day. The 'Age of Aquarius' into which we are moving is one of the mind and of freedom, entailing responsibility at all levels. This means releasing the past, forgiveness, integrating the shadow, understanding polarities and assuming responsibility. H-A takes a realistic view of our situation, suggesting that each of us can focus our direction by weaving together what he calls the three basic tenets of spiritual living: unconditional love, forgiveness and respect. Bringing these principles forth both individually and collectively would go a long way towards resolving many of our challenges.

The Project

by **Mark Macy**

Eloquent Books 2009, 222 pp., \$26.50, h/b.

Mark Macy is a pioneer of Instrumental Transcommunication, whereby spirits and angels can allegedly be in contact through telephones, radios, televisions, computers and other devices. The book opens up a perspective on human history where ethereal beings are close companions on the human evolutionary journey. Many spiritually oriented people will already be aware of this, but it will come as a perhaps unacceptable proposition to others. Mark tells an alternative story of our cultural heritage involving the destruction of another planet and crossbreeding with our own leading through Atlantis to our own time. He adduces various levels of evidence to make his case. The underlying thrust of the book is that we need to reinvent ourselves to be good and to manifest paradise on earth, bringing our noble side forward. We can all work on ourselves through meditation and prayer, which Mark would see as refining the vibration of our being so as to resonate with the good and draw it to us. The perspective is far from anthropocentric, since we are embedded in biosystems, ecosystems and social systems in a nested structure. He suggests a number of principles and a new approach which he calls E-conometrics, allowing him to track three defined economic variables are of people, products and resources. His overall concern is with the spiritualisation of mankind and the exercises and tools required to help bring it about.

Possession, Power and the New Age – Ambiguities of Authority in Neoliberal Societies

by **Matthew Wood**

Ashgate, 2007, 212pp., £55, h/b.

Gunnel Minett writes: This is a thorough and methodologically rigorous sociological enquiry into new age phenomena. Matthew Wood first challenges the theoretical weaknesses that underlie most analyses of new age groups and ideas, proposing that any analysis must be firmly grounded in an explicit and coherent sociological context which truly explores the social and cultural contexts. He then describes his field work over several years in the Nottingham region where he became a member of a local new age meditation group and attended other events, such as channelling workshops, mind-body-spirit fairs, and spiritualist and pagan groups. Unless you are familiar with the language of contemporary social theory, this book might be a challenging read. It does, however, make a general and very important observation, which is also vindicated by my own observations of this field. Wood notices that although most new age groups and leaders use the language of deep democracy, facilitated leadership and egalitarian group dynamics, in actual fact their behaviour is not congruent. These leaders are frequently authoritarian, non-reflective and unable gracefully to receive contrary feedback. This makes salutary reading for anyone inclined to idealise or ignore the egoistic behaviour typical of spiritual leaders throughout the ages. Plus ça change ...

**DO WE HAVE YOUR E-MAIL?
HAVE YOU RECENTLY CHANGED YOUR E-MAIL?**
If in doubt, please e-mail us at info@scimednet.org