



## books in brief

*David Lorimer*

Readers may be interested to know that the book review database set up by Kevin Ashbridge in 1996 now has over 4,800 entries! This means an average of 300 books a year - which partly explains the length of this section.

### SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

#### **Geometry In Nature**

by John Blackwood

*Floris Books 2012, 190 pp., £20.00, p/b.*

A beautifully illustrated book thematically related to Keith Critchlow's work on the geometry of flowers, but considering a whole range of forms in Nature. The author has a background in Steiner education and is inspired by the work of Lawrence Edwards. His starting point is that thoughts are inherent in the things we see. This is easy to understand in the case of mechanical design, but is an extrapolation for the rest of Nature. The reader is able to grasp a series of forms and how they are expressed in Nature, for instance leaves, crystals, shells and butterflies. The author discusses the measurement and orientation of lines and different forms of curves as well as form in the mineral, animal and plant worlds. All this helps the reader to develop a sense of wonder at the natural world.

#### **The Science Magpie**

by Simon Flynn

*Icon Books Ltd 2012, 277 pp., £12.99, h/b.*

As the title suggests, this book collects fascinating facts, stories, poems and even jokes from the history of science. The short entries mean that it is a book that one can dip in and out of. For instance, there is a section on Occam's razor giving quotations from various authorities besides Ockham himself - Aristotle, Newton, Kepler and Bertrand Russell. Another entry is on the derivation of scientific words, mainly from Greek, then a good explanation of the Fibonacci numbers. Sir Francis Darwin is quoted as saying that in science the credit goes to the man who convinces the world, not to the man to whom the idea first occurs. Perhaps the most amusing entry is towards the end of the book with a glossary of common phrases found in scientific papers which actually mean something quite different: 'it has long been known that' can mean 'I haven't bothered to look at the original reference.' The third person expression 'it is suggested that' actually means I think. A very good book for guest bedrooms.

#### **Constructing the World**

by David J. Chalmers

*Oxford University Press 2012, 494 pp., £25, h/b.*

Here Chalmers develops a picture of reality on which all truths can be derived from a limited class of basic truths, building on the earlier work of Carnap. He argues that ideal reasoning from a limited class of basic truths yields all truths about the world in a metaphysical epistemology. He also uses scrutability to analyze the unity of science, to defend a sort of conceptual metaphysics, and to mount a structuralist response to scepticism. It is an exercise in formal philosophy directed specifically at philosophers.

#### **Ignorance**

by Stuart Firestein

*Oxford University Press 2012, 195 pp., \$21.95, h/b.*

The author of this well-written and stimulating book began his career in theatre, and only became a biologist and neuroscientist in his 30s. He currently teaches at Columbia University. The object of the book is to show how ignorance drives science by suggesting questions to which the answer is not yet known, but might be discovered through further research. The progress of specialisation allied to the exponential increase in scientific knowledge means that individual scientists are ignorant about large areas outside their discipline; and those within disciplines are always thinking of new questions to explore. Besides this, there are intrinsic limitations to various fields, such as the uncertainty principle in physics and the limits of logic in Gödel. The case histories show how this approach can be fruitful in a number of disciplines, and the actual process of scientific research may involve more guesswork than is communicated to the public. All in all, an interesting new perspective.

#### **What is Life? How Chemistry Becomes Biology**

by Addy Pross

*Oxford University Press 2012, 200 pp., £16.99, h/b.*

This book takes its title from the famous essay by Schrödinger, reconsidering the question asked about how life emerged from nonlife. The author is a specialist in systems chemistry, and shows how chemical systems become more complex and acquire properties of life. He introduces a new concept - dynamic kinetic stability - to explain how biology can emerge from chemistry and how this represents an equivalent to Darwinian evolution in biology: the key is continuity. He argues controversially that holism is in fact a reductionist elaboration, and more plausibly that reduction in its various forms will remain the central conceptual tool in scientific endeavour. Towards the end of the book, he touches on consciousness, observing that matter can be self-aware, recommending that we study neural activity at its most rudimentary level and advance gradually to humans.

#### **The Brain Supremacy**

by Kathleen Taylor

*Oxford University Press 2012, 368 pp., £18.99, h/b.*

Subtitled 'notes from the frontiers of neuroscience', this informative and readable book looks behind the neurohype to assess the implications of current and projected developments in the study of the brain, based on conventional understanding of an organic approach that rejects the idea of a spiritual essence. The title indicates that we are approaching a new era of brain supremacy that will offer some human beings the capacity to manipulate human nature by changing the brain. As with any other form of technical progress, this will be a two-edged sword that can be used both constructively and for manipulative purposes such as neuromarketing or military advantage. New ethical issues will inevitably arise along with

technological developments. There is a great deal of detail about new research on the structure and functions of the brain as well as imaging techniques. Later on, the author considers ways of changing brains experimentally and the conclusions outline the implications of our new understanding. She calls the Athenian path of science the wise way of adapting to a world we cannot control by developing more accurate models, powerful predictions and efficient technologies. Ideally, the Athenian thinker can relinquish the longest held scientific belief if the evidence demands it. On the other hand, the Promethean engineer changes reality in order to fit their own ideas - the question is how far we would choose to change ourselves, not just nature around us. Scientists need an informed public to debate some of these implications.

### **Discord**

by Mike Goldsmith

*Oxford University Press 2012, 317 pp., £16.99, h/b.*

I happened to be reading through this book at the St Leonards School Christmas mix concert, and there was only one performance that could be fairly described as noise rather than music. This is the story of noise, which I think is a first in the field. It is full of historical curiosities including descriptions of noise in warfare, in Ancient Rome and details of the soundscape of 18th-century London. I remember reading a book by Schopenhauer how irritated he was by the cracking of whips right outside his house - these days, irritations are of a different kind. We are no longer subject to street criers, but rather advertisements. Interestingly, the etymological derivation of noise is related to nausea. The author also describes the history of acoustics and ways in which the science of sound developed. The noisiest commercial aircraft - Concorde - is no longer flying, but even that was nothing compared with Krakatoa, which erupted in 1883 and is the loudest noise in recorded history, releasing energy equivalent to 13,000 times that produced by the Hiroshima bomb and audible at a distance of 4,000 km!

### **Air**

by William Bryant Logan

*North Atlantic Books 2012, 397 pp., p/b.*

The author of this unusual book is a specialist in trees. The earlier volumes of this trilogy were entitled *Dirt and Oak*; he now moves on to air, because it is all around us, mixing research, reflection and personal experience in a journalistic tour de force. The reader comes to realise many dimensions of air, not simply in connection with the weather, but also in terms of dust storms, pollen and pheromones. There is an interesting section on 19th-century Paris where Pierre Miquel researched the concentrations of bacteria and fungi in the air. Over a 16 mi.<sup>2</sup> area, he estimated that 40 trillion bacteria were produced, of which 5 trillion would end up in the air; the opposite was true of fungi in that very few were found indoors and these migrated from country to town while bacteria moved in the other direction. It was also very interesting to find out about the air quality in Manhattan after 9/11. More than 40,000 of these 70,000 estimated to be in the area and breathing the air have reported various breathing difficulties - Logan found considerable quantities of toxins like aluminium and magnesium silicates as well as asbestos. A further fascinating story concerns the weather on D-Day. All the preparations were made and discussed, and in the end it was decided to attack even though there was a force 4 wind in the English Channel. The Germans had also been making their own forecasts, and had not anticipated that the attack would occur in such a wind and therefore with such choppy seas - they were wrong. It is an engaging narrative.

### **Networks - A Very Short Introduction**

by Guido Caldarelli & Michele Catanzaro

*Oxford University Press 2012, 122 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

This is an up-to-date summary of what is currently known about networks of all kinds. It is easy to forget that they represent a new way of thinking that has come to the fore in the last 40 years. Indeed, the use of the term was comparatively rare when the SMN was founded, representing a new and flat form of organisation. The dynamics and structure of various types of network are described, including ecosystems and food chains. An interesting sideline concerns spread of epidemics, naturally accelerated through our modern transport systems. Understanding network structures and systems is now a key component of education.

## MEDICINE/HEALTH

### **Yes No**

by Uwe Albrecht MD

*Hay House Publishers 2012, 170 pp., £8.99, p/b.*

Many readers will be familiar with kinesiology muscle testing. This technique is a variation on the theme, explaining the arm-length test as a way of speaking to the subconscious. The first chapter explains the test itself, before applying it to two key test questions and everyday situations as well as specific topics. The author gives the subconscious 95% as opposed to 5% for the conscious mind, meaning that change has to involve and work with the subconscious. The reader is able to perfect the technique before moving on. Once the question has been clearly posed, the yes/no answer can be obtained. You can then refer to the book when you have a significant choice to make and want some feedback from the subconscious.

### **An Introduction to the Lightning Process**

by Phil Parker

*Hay House Publishers 2007, 263 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

By all accounts, the Lightning Process has achieved some remarkable results for a variety of physiological and psychological conditions. The book is in fact a prolonged promotion of the seminar, but gives some useful background and content. Central is the phenomenon of neuroplasticity, whereby the brain can rewire itself, especially when there is a Physical Emergency Response that can initiate a Downward Spiral. There are five key concepts covering one's influence over oneself, patterns, interconnectedness and the capacity to retrain by creating new neural pathways. The second half of the book is devoted to case histories of people who have used the process to achieve a dramatic recovery. Interestingly, it has also been the target of ignorant reactions on the Internet. At the end, there is a questionnaire to assess whether it is worth considering the next step. Throughout the book, there are also some practical exercises.

### **Beating Bipolar**

by Blake LeVine

*Hay House Publishers 2012, 183 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

The author of this useful book is a social worker who has worked in a large number of contexts on helping people improve their emotional health. It follows the struggle of a leading therapist with the bipolar condition and proposes a number of lessons - some derived from real-life stories - that can be applied. It is aimed at families, teachers, mental health professionals and those dealing with the condition, providing a route map towards greater resilience and even spiritual renewal.

**F\*\*k it therapy****by John C. Parkin***Hay House Publishers 2012, 315 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

As the title suggests, this is a refreshing and irreverent approach to sorting out our lives. The author said F\*\*k it to his highflying job in 2005, and set off to Italy to create a retreat centre. His first book sold 250,000 copies, and since then he and his wife have taught thousands of people to ease up, let go and say f\*\*k it. Many of us live in prisons of our own making and are stuck in our heads living a life of compromise and paying too much attention to what others think. The book explains common prison walls in terms of fear, seriousness, self-doubt, lack of consciousness, perfectionism and lack of imagination. It goes on to instructions for how to break through or even walk through walls and pay less attention to others' opinions. There is a 'secret' section of unnumbered pages suggesting a six-fold process of open, relax, shift perspective, tune in, trust and follow. There is a highly amusing section on reactions to a person deciding to go to drama school, with sample emails from friends, family and colleagues. Altogether, a liberating read - and I actually laughed out loud at some of the sections.

**Pause Button Therapy****by Martin and Marion Shirran***Hay House Publishers 2012, 292 pp., £12.99.*

A simple and practical book describing a new form of therapy that can be applied by everyone as a means of breaking negative and unconscious responses. You simply pause, freeze time for a few moments and fast forward to consider the consequences of your impending action. The four phases are pause, think, decide and act. You can then rewind to the present and consider the differing consequences of possible courses of action. The book describes many successful applications, including with children.

**PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION****The Highest State of Consciousness****by John White***White Crow Books 1972, 464 pp., p/b.*

This classic book was first published in 1972 and is reprinted with a very short introduction by the author, reflecting on 40 years of experience since that time. It contains material from Aldous Huxley, Stanley Krippner, Richard Bucke, RD Laing, Walter Pahnke, Jean Houston, Abraham Maslow, Richard Wilhelm, Alan Watts and many others. The 33 chapters range across philosophy, and mysticism, spiritual practice, physiology, religious experience, the transpersonal, comparative religion and meditation. Many perspectives are given on what constitutes the highest state of consciousness.

**Non-Duality****by Doiwe Tiemersma***John Hunt Publishing 2012, 240 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

This book by a retired Dutch professor is an edited collection of talks and articles thematically arranged around the overall topic of groundless openness representing a sense of freedom and unity. Words are even more inadequate in expressing the subtleties of this direct experience but they can evoke some degree of understanding in the reader. Tiemersma presents a V model of the relation between Subject and Object moving from separation through inter-relation to identity. Some sections give instructions for experience: 'as long as you let the knowing do its work, everything continues by itself. Stay in the open sphere. Be completely open. Then there is more lucidity and everything becomes clear. Stay with yourself. Focus steadily inwards on the essential: the core of your being. Relax in your own centre.' The 'dissolution of the last standpoint' - that of the witness - leads to an experience of universal being-awareness and love-being. A profound series of texts.

**Companion to Christian Mysticism****by Julia A. Lamm***John Wiley & Sons Ltd 2013, 649 pp., h/b.*

This is an impressive volume of more than 40 essays by leading scholars in the field. The approach is partly historical and partly thematic. The editor contributes a very useful introduction, observing that the term mysticism is itself a modern construct used to identify and explain certain ways of being religious. It has also been used as a pejorative term. More specifically, it is always based on transformative experience and challenges outer forms of belief; hence the correlation between mystics and heretics, which is explored in one essay in terms of both inhabiting the margins of religious communities. As one would expect, the coverage is comprehensive across different approaches in various historical epochs. Hence the reader can home in on particular interests such as Meister Eckhart, Bonaventure, Teresa of Avila, Nicholas of Cusa or Thomas Merton. It is a pity that there is no special essay devoted to Swedenborg, as this continues to exclude him from the mainstream. Interestingly, there is a contribution on the interface between mysticism and neuroscience by an academic neurosurgeon. Douglas Anderson considers work on neural correlates of mystical experience but manages to square the circle within his own mind and personal confession of Faith in the face of ultimate mystery.

**Journey to the Heart****edited by Laurence Freeman, OSB, Kallistos Ware and others***Canterbury Press 2011, 428 pp., £20, p/b.*

This book covers some of the same ground as the last one, but with more emphasis on the spiritual journey as it emerged out of the work of the Christian Meditation Centre. It contains illustrations as well as boxes with historical background and a glossary of terms; in this way, the reader can appreciate what was going on at the time of various writers. Once again, the treatment is historical, and some mystics have separate chapters while they are only mentioned in the previous book. These include Evagrius of Pontus, John Cassian and, perhaps more surprisingly, Hildegard of Bingen. Among more modern mystics, there are chapters on Evelyn Underhill, Etty Hillesum, Thomas Merton, Swami Abhishiktananda, Bede Griffiths and John Main. Each essay relates the life and practice of the mystic to modern preoccupations and issues such as discernment, self-knowledge and the nature of prayer. There are also key quotations that can be used as a source of contemplative reading.

**Ubuntu! The Spirit of Humanity****by Helen Sayers***Oman Ministry of Information 2010, 60 pp., p/b.*

Ubuntu may be an unfamiliar word to some readers. I first came across it in the work of Desmond Tutu, who regards it as a gift from Africa signifying being generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. The human being is not essentially understood as an individual, but rather as one who belongs, participates, shares - realising that we are part of a greater whole. Our humanity is therefore bound up with each other. This book is about rediscovering the art of living together in harmony, and consists of nine workshop modules as well as an explanation of the background. It can be recommended to everyone working in an educational context.

**Faith Beyond Belief****by Margaret Placentra Johnston***Quest Books 2012, 300 pp., \$17.95, p/b.*

This searching book is about people who have left the church behind, and begins with the experience of the author realising that she had become an atheist, that reason had triumphed over her previous belief structures. Her main thesis is that much traditional religion promotes a spiritually immature message based on unquestioning belief and obedience. She outlines a four stage process with Lawless at the beginning, then Faithful, Rational and Mystic. Various parts of the book illustrate this progression with people struggling at the threshold of the stages, which are also related to the work of James Fowler and schematised in a series of charts. The Mystic is one who has gone beyond the rational stage with its own form of certainty and remains open to growth and the quest for deeper truth; this is the faith beyond belief of the title, one that identifies with the universal. It is the hope of the author that the religion of the future will promote the necessary spiritual exploration to reach this level. Many readers will find echoes of their own spiritual journey in this book.

**Why Women Believe in God****by Liz Hodgkinson with BK Jayanti***John Hunt Publishing 2012, 154 pp., £11.99, p/b.*

Many people will be familiar with the work of the Brahma Kumaris and perhaps with Sister Jayanti. This book is a discussion on spiritual themes between her and the journalist Liz Hodgkinson as she probes difficult issues connected with spirituality and religion, including relationships with science. The Brahma Kumaris are unusual in being run by senior women and the thrust of the book is that women must now step up and play a much more active role in world affairs. The feminine principle of harmony and interconnectedness needs to replace the out-dated masculine principle of 'divide and conquer, rule and subdue.' For this to happen, we need a transformation of consciousness and the development of spirituality in terms of being aware and acting on vibrations of love, goodness, compassion and justice. In this respect, meditation is a crucial discipline enabling direct contact with the Source.

**The Complete Tao Te Ching****by Jean Levi***Inner Traditions International 2011, 184 pp., £15.99, h/b.*

I imagine that a number of readers, like myself, have various editions of the Tao Te Ching - if so, you will certainly want to add this one to your collection. The editor explains that the book is also known as the Book of the Way and of Virtue. In human life, the Way becomes Law, drawing its validity from seasonal cycles. He quotes the allegory of the stray sheep as a delightful illustration of the Chinese way of thinking - the animal can't be found because each fork leads to another such, representing a frustrating series of tortuous questions and evasive answers where the answer itself is a further enigma, perhaps even more impenetrable than the first. Hence, 'only one who finds his identity in returning to unity will avoid getting lost.' There is a danger of mistaking fragmented vision for the whole of knowledge. The book also contains the four canons of the Yellow Emperor, restored to its place alongside the Tao Te Ching. These writings recognise the correlation of inner states with outer conditions, especially so for as the rulers are concerned. They must have deep knowledge of natural law, 'the course of things within the universe.' More specifically, 'encompassing the One, establishing the Norm, he will unify the universe.'

**The Word in the Pattern (1905)****by Mary Seton Watts***The Arts & Crafts Movement in Surrey 2012, 112 pp., p/b.*

Member Desna Greenhow kindly sent me this fascinating book after the annual gathering this year. Mary Watts was a Scot by birth and married to the artist GF Watts. She is the designer of a cemetery chapel in Surrey, and was deeply immersed in the Arts and Crafts movement, in which my architect grandfather Sir Robert Lorimer was also involved. This book is the outcome of a symposium held in 2010, and there are a number of essays along with Mary's original text. These give some essential background to the work and help elucidate its symbolism. Mary's own essay, accompanied by line drawings, elaborates the meaning of some of her panels, for instance those representing the Way, the Truth and the Life - the first of these is a labyrinth, while the third is a vine. A further panel represents Hope, Truth, Love and Light, with attendant spirits. Having read this, I am very much looking forward to seeing the place itself.

**The JOSEPH Communications: The Fall****by Michael G. Reccia***Band of Light Media Ltd 2012, 288 pp., £14.95, p/b.*

This book conveys an urgent spiritual message of awakening and the opportunity for real change on our planet. It is channelled from another dimension that has a broader view and understanding of life than we have here. Each chapter consists of a talk and responses to questions by the other sitters in the group. We are all expressions of God reflecting God, an insight of which we need to become aware; each experience enhances our capacity and potential for further growth. We are encouraged to focus on our limitless potential in the now. The Fall entails separation, anxiety and fear, leading to an exclusive focus on the physical as identity. We are then trapped in the system, but we can extricate ourselves through remembering the love-light within that we truly are, a message also conveyed in the NDE. We are at a crisis point of choice, not for the first time, and our future depends on this collective choice involving the integration of the physical mind with the spiritual heart. In this way we are permeated with spiritual energy, but a critical mass is required - each of us has a role to play. The book has a powerful resonance, calling every reader to remember who they are and to awaken.

**Reflections on Gurdjieff's Whim****by Keith A. Buzzell***Fifth Press 2012, 266 pp., \$40, p/b.*

Keith Buzzell is an osteopath and long-time student of Gurdjieff. The whim of the title is a reference to Gurdjieff's ambition to replace what he regarded as an out-dated conception of God. This is a book to be studied rather than read through, and it is full of illuminating charts and diagrams. One of the most important ideas is the triune principle also explained in terms of the three human brains representing the instinctive, the sense of self as distinct and the higher sense of I. A new concept to most will be that of the Okidanokh as a means of reconciling science and spirituality. Science begins from the study of effects, while spirituality tries to penetrate into deeper causation. The Okidanokh is the omnipresent active element behind form emanating from the Absolute and also responsible for transformation; all this is illustrated in a series of quite complex diagrams. I think some familiarity with the writings of Gurdjieff is a prerequisite to embarking on this work of considerable scholarship.

**Transcendental Meditation****by Jack Forem***Hay House Publishers 2012, 359 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

This is an updated edition of a classic book first published in 1973, when Transcendental Meditation (TM) was in a much earlier phase of development. The Beatles had popularised it in the late 60s, and our very own president Peter Fenwick did some of the earliest research. A good deal has changed in the interim. There is more knowledge available through a variety of programmes, and a great deal more research. More than 350 research papers have been published in a large variety of journals, which are listed in the book. Many early practitioners now have several decades of experience meditating, and the movement is spread around the world. One further addition is a personal account of how the author himself got involved in TM. As one would expect, the coverage is comprehensive, citing studies across a wide variety of disciplines such as neurophysiology, health, longevity, education, self-development and values. There is also more general discussion on religion and spirituality and an emphasis on the freedom gained as a result of practice. Finally, there is much to hope for in the chapter about the world we can create. At the very least, this shows that inner spiritual practice can have a subtle effect on the outer conditions.

**The Wisdom Teachings of Harish Johari on the Mahabharata****by Wil Geraets***Destiny Books 2011, 241 pp., £14.99, p/b.*

This compilation is based on a large number of talks given by Harish Johari, translating the wisdom of the Mahabharata into contemporary and understandable forms. It contains many useful explanations and illuminating stories, including that of the saint and the scorpion. In a section on fighting for justice and truth, Johari reminds us that we may need to fight for what we believe in, just as Krishna told Arjuna. As the author puts it: 'wisdom points to the right way, but it does not destroy the evil. For the destruction of evil the action of Arjuna is needed.' More generally, the story of humanity in the Mahabharata is also the story of individual lives as well as an explanation of the essence of Indian philosophy, describing 'how to achieve a better place in life and how finally to leave the body and merge into cosmic consciousness.'

**Seed Sounds For Tuning The Chakras****by James D'Angelo, PhD***Destiny Books 2012, 118 pp., \$14.95, p/b.*

I have experienced Jim's work at a number of meetings, including some of the exercises presented in this interesting and practical book. We sometimes forget that the universe is essentially vibratory and that we all embody and transmit a certain frequency. This book explains how to awaken and resonate to 'the innate vibratory powers of vowels, consonants and seed syllables for transformation and healing.' Jim explains the structure and psychology of the chakras as they relate to vowels and consonants before moving on to more detailed explanations of individual chapters and giving corresponding toning practices. A huge amount of knowledge is distilled in this book. There is an accompanying CD that brings the book to life and makes it easier for the reader to practise. Intriguingly, one of my dogs was in the room when I was playing it and was quite mystified by what she heard!

**The House of Truth****by Michael Meredith***The Word of the Dragon Publishers 2012, 260 pp., £9.95, p/b.*

Michael Meredith is an engineering scientist has been on a spiritual quest for two decades, during which time he has met people of many faiths and got to know Rowan Williams, who contributes the foreword to the book. He introduces his model based on the axes of truth - personal/public and experience and proof/debatable indirect proof, leading to a model of four rooms of truth. There is the experiential room of religion, the empirical room of science, then what he calls the personal and public debating rooms. These provide a framework that can also represent various types of experience, for instance personal debates opening the mind and the movement towards and mature spirituality based on experience. He argues that the personal experiential room is the gold standard for religion, while is the universal empirical plays the same role for science. What makes the book different and engaging is the weaving of experience and encounters with various teachers from different traditions along the way and the physicist Chris Isham. The author sees the gold in each of these approaches and finds an important truth to sympathise with. In the conversation with the Archbishop, Rowan Williams emphasises the habit of silence and spiritual maturity and speaks about his own development. As the author claims, these really are open-minded conversations in the house of truth opening up deeper aspects of life. See [www.thewordofthedragon.com](http://www.thewordofthedragon.com)

**Soul of Light****by Joma Sipe***Quest Books 2012, 125 pp., \$26.95, p/b.*

This is an extraordinary and beautiful book consisting mainly of intricate illuminated geometrical paintings of great power. The author has been inspired by the work of HP Blavatsky and Eckhart Tolle, among others. He explains his painting process, and there is a fascinating initial chapter showing the difference between the version with geometrical forms and the final illuminated one. Subsequent chapters represent spiritual forms such as chakras, mandalas and the tree of life, as well as themes like cathedrals of the soul and portals of the spirit. The paintings would be suitable for silent and inspiring contemplation.

**Spirituality - A Very Short Introduction****by Philip Sheldrake***Oxford University Press 2012, 133 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

This is a really excellent overview of the field, drawing on a range of interpretive frameworks. His working definition refers to lifestyles and practices that embody a vision of the fulfilment of human potential. Readers will be familiar with the phrase 'spiritual but not religious' pointing beyond orthodoxies, but Sheldrake also covers spirituality within religious traditions - Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, to which he adds neopaganism, esotericism, secularism and philosophy. He adds sections on psychology, science, gender and aesthetics. The other chapters cover types of spirituality, experience, ways of life, the interface with religion and society. He concludes with three observations: that spirituality expresses the human quest for identity and meaning, that it suggests a move beyond self-absorption to service and finally that it unlocks creativity and meaning. This is a book well worth pondering.

**A Vision of the Aquarian Age**

by George Trevelyan

*White Crow Books 2012, 131 pp., £10.99, p/b.***Operation Redemption**

by George Trevelyan

*White Crow Books 2012, 165 pp., £10.99, p/b.***Exploration Into God**

by George Trevelyan

*White Crow Books 2012, 172 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

Some readers will remember Sir George Trevelyan, perhaps at an early Mystics and Scientists conference where he would give an opening lecture and recite poetry to illustrate his points. These three books have now been reprinted as a trilogy, with a delightful introduction by his daughter Catriona Tyson. George's sense of fun comes across in one of her stories where he arranged a pony trekking holiday with one of her friends and hired an old racehorse, which promptly jumped out of the field and them stranded in a barn in deepest Shropshire.

These books were written over a 15-year period during which time I knew George well and ran courses with him in Ireland and the south of France. It is striking how his thought still speaks to the reader 20 or 30 years on as he had such a good grasp of the holistic and spiritual worldview, from Gaia to mysticism. He was deeply influenced by Rudolf Steiner and trained as an Alexander teacher as well as being a master craftsman in furniture making. He had a vision of the cosmic Christ and the eventual triumph of the good. Latterly, he became interested in the Essenes, channelling and UFOs, which feature in his later books. In his last book, he relates something of his own life and quest. There is also a very engaging letter to the reader, where one can almost hear his voice. He always urged his listeners to test his ideas rather than accept them - so now a new generation of readers has a chance to sample the richness of his thought.

**Nature Spirits**

by Susan Raven

*Clairview Books 2012, 162 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

Susan Raven is a singer and songwriter who has been living in the remote hills of mid-Wales for the last 14 years. In this profound and instructive book developed on the basis of the insights of Rudolf Steiner, she guides the reader into modes of communication with elemental beings, drawing on her own experience. What marks this book out is the way in which a higher science is integrated into the thesis as the prospect of scientific seers becomes closer. These would be trained in both qualitative and quantitative methods, able to switch their perception between different levels. She points out that our ancestors lived with elementals and nature spirits as an ever-present, interactive reality like some of the founders of Findhorn - Dorothy Maclean and Ogilvy Crombie. One particularly striking experience at Hawkwood relates the author interacting with an oak tree and being told that humans should reverence themselves, thus leading to the philosophy of reverence for life, as espoused by Albert Schweitzer. Readers are invited to develop their own higher perception and therefore take a more active role in the evolutionary process currently underway.

**Learning from My Father**

by David Lawther Johnson

*Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing co 2012, 151 pp., £15, p/b.*

The context of this book is the death of the author's father, who was a pastor for 50 years. He found that he had an advanced and untreatable form of cancer, giving him relatively little time to come to terms with his situation and say his farewells. The author then rediscovers his exchange of letters with his father when he was an undergraduate - wise and compassionate, as fathers ideally should be. He relates

everyday incidents to their large context of life and faith, for instance when he hears from his barber that his son had died on the track at 18. This prompts reflection on death, eternal life and resurrection within a Christian context.

**The Business of Spirit**

by Meditatio Forum

*2011, 44 pp., p/b.*

This small book consists of four talks on leadership from people already engaged in the practice of Christian meditation. One by Laurence Freeman is specifically on the practice of meditation, while the other contributions talk about the experience of being more rooted and centred, and how this impacts on business life. There are many valuable insights. Peter Song gives five principles of enlightened leadership, including clarity of mind, humility and the wise deployment of energy. The benefits of meditation referred to highlight developing a spirit of attention and a finer sense of judgement. This last quality enables one to make better decisions, especially when one is forced to choose between a range of bad options. Although this is a small book, every reader will be able to benefit from reflecting on self-management.

**The Book of Possibilities**

by The Earthlinks Circle

*Derwen Publishing 2012, 262 pp., £59.95, p/b.*

This must be the most expensive paperback ever sent for review, and seems to have arrived possibly as a mistaken delivery. It is subtitled 'a guide for collective transformation' and explains the transformative process of a group of servers in Wales. As such, it is aimed more at groups than at individuals; it encourages us to take an active and intelligent role in evolution based on a feeling of connectedness. Central to the agenda is the acceptance and valuing of diversity, which arises as an issue even in a small group and can drive people apart. The group has been meditating in the service of humanity for a number of years, and has access to higher guidance. Here the processes and procedures are described so that other groups embarking on a similar venture might benefit from their experience and commitment.

**PSYCHOLOGY/PARAPSYCHOLOGY****Borges and Memory**

by Rodrigo Quian Quiroga

*John Wiley & Sons Ltd 2012, 213 pp., £17.95, h/b.*

A fascinating book by a neuroscientist who discovered parallels with his own work in a story by Borges called Funes the Memorious, who remembers everything in excruciating detail. The author contacted Borges' widow in order to find out what background reading had informed the story. He delves into the history of work on memory, concentrating particularly on the study by Alexander Luria of Shereshevskii, a person who is unable to forget anything and whose phenomenal memory was accompanied by an extraordinary capacity for synaesthesia. He had to make the same effort to forget as we do to remember. He could even remember a made up meaningless mathematical formula after 15 years. William James observes interestingly that selective remembering actually depends on the capacity to forget, and it is interesting to note that Shereshevskii was incapable of logical thought as he was overwhelmed by his memories. Similarly, the author suggests that our current information overload means that we do not take the time to think. The neuroscience here is orthodox (mind equals neuron) but the exposition will be of interest for both lovers of literature and science. Extracts from Borges appear in the original with translation.

**The Psychic's Handbook****by Julie Soskin (SMN)***Watkins Books Ltd. 2012, 244 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

Julie has many years experience as a psychic, mystic and teacher. Here she distils her experience into a handbook for psycho-spiritual development involving access to deeper levels of intuitive awareness and a realisation of transformative possibilities. Julie draws on her own insights alongside scientific and spiritual sources, which relates the principles explained to everyday life. She uses the language of energy to describe more subtle dimensions such as the astral realm and the work of earth spirits. She presents a comparative analysis of different models alongside her own, showing how various stages can be related. In this minefield, Julie is a responsible, critical and assured guide to spiritual evolution, and her book can be recommended to anyone with a serious interest in the field.

**Be Your Potential****by Joseph Clough***Hay House Publishers 2012, 178 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

A concise and inspiring distillation of lessons learned over the last 10 years by an author who is still only 28. Having turned his own life around he is now devoted to helping others, drawing on his own experience. Being reasonably familiar with this kind of literature, I found the most significant ideas lucidly expressed, such as the importance of focus and direction, and realising that we live in an energetic universe. However, we tend to be trapped by our own past beliefs and perceptions. Joseph shows a way forward and provides free resources on his web site [www.josephclough.com](http://www.josephclough.com). He emphasises attention and intention so far as our feelings are concerned, and makes practical suggestions that readers can immediately implement. His guidelines include knowing the outcome, taking inspired action, having awareness, being flexible and operating from a physiological and psychological state of excellence. Our environment is the one we choose to create.

**Is Your Life Mapped Out?****by David Hamilton***Hay House 2012, 264 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

David Hamilton worked in the pharmaceutical industry before turning to writing in 2005. This book gives a good introductory overview of issues surrounding destiny and free will, drawing on physics, metaphysics, psychology, philosophy and parapsychology. He introduces the interesting idea of the Big You, and his understanding of consciousness is based on our identity as a condensation in a universal field. He comes up with the theory of the Tree of Probable Life within a multi-dimensional perspective: there are many branches that we can choose as our life unfolds. What we call reality can be expressed as an equation equalling mind x forces of destiny; in its more detailed form this involves intention, emotion, beliefs, momentum of current experience as well as external and internal forces and influences. He also spells out some helpful practical applications, including the importance of gratitude.

**A Universal Theory of Mind: Active-Perception****by David Francis Barnes***Defacto Press 2012, 255 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

An original and technical book articulating a theory of ecological mind, whereby mind is defined as the intelligence or organisation between a person and a personal world. As an ecological phenomenon, mind is observed 'at the interface between creature and habitat.' This theory moves beyond the idea that mind is contained within a person or a brain, which he identifies as an organ of correlation. Barnes takes from Buddhism the idea that there is no Self as an entity in its own right persisting over time. He rejects what he calls one-way pipeline perception in favour of 'active-perception', a fractal coordination between the creature and its habitat involving a two-way engagement. In this model, consciousness becomes a

matter of focus, contrasting with active-perception as broad and deep. It was interesting to revisit the ecological theory of perception by James Gibson, but it would have been useful for the author to have added the perspective of Iain McGilchrist to his discussion of focus and field.

**Love, Life, God****by Jarrad Hewett***O Books, 2011, 131 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

An exploration of the nature and management of thought and conscious energy that leads the reader to be able to create a future from choice rather than reaction. Much of what we call creation is in fact re-creation from existing expectations. Beliefs seem to direct the energy of thought, and we can experience the emotion of what we want in advance. The new concept of Self-Love rather than self-love invites a higher sense of identity as the giver and receiver of love. The format is a dialogue between the personality of the author and a source of higher intelligence, which may well be his own; it does not matter that much. The reader is encouraged to trust life and go beyond opposites towards convergence, healing and balance. There is a good deal of wisdom in this small book, which is well worth working with.

**The Law of Attraction****by Andrea Matthews***O Books, 2011, 195 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

This book will be of interest to any readers wanting to understand the deeper aspects of the law of attraction. Rather than trying to create using positive thoughts derived from the ego, we are encouraged to enter the flow of universal law, as a result of which we will manifest joy as an expression of the energy of God. A key insight is to realise that we are already in that flow. There are some parallels with the previous book in the emphasis on knowing the I AM as the essence of identity hidden under many layers of consciousness. Realising this means that one stops striving and enters a space of effortless effort beyond attempts to control life. Life is seen as an impulse towards wholeness in a similar way to the philosophy of Thomas Troward. The Law of One underlies both the process of projection and attraction and we are ultimately driven by the desire to be, which is the highest quest of the human being consciously aligned with the ultimate force of life and love.

**ProcessMind****by Arnold Mindell***Quest Books, 2010, 302 pp., \$17.95, p/b.*

Subtitled 'A user's guide to connecting with the Mind of God', this book takes the reader through a series of processes related to personal life, relationships and the world to access the deepest part of the self, which the author calls ProcessMind. This is the organising factor operating in our personal lives and in the universe - it is both inside and outside, local and nonlocal. In this book it is used on a number of levels - as a theory, field concept, practice, as the deepest self, presence and a non-dual quality of consciousness. Throughout the book, there are exercises and points of reflection, and perhaps one of the most interesting explorations is that of mythostasis where we can reconcile opposites rather than succumb to consensual reality.

**FUTURE STUDIES/ECONOMICS/ECOLOGY****Climate Change Ethics****by Donald A. Brown***Routledge 2012, 271 pp., £26.99, p/b.*

This is a powerful book written partly in response to a recent study by Stephen Gardiner describing climate change ethics as

the perfect moral storm. By and large, the ethical dimension, whereby the climate change threat is caused by the wealthiest while putting the most vulnerable at risk, has been ignored. We all know that climate change is a worldwide problem requiring a worldwide solution, but we have so far come up short on our ethical obligations; this book examines why this has happened. The same argument applies to the over-exploitation of resources, of which climate change is arguably a symptom. The evasion of these issues has been abetted by those advocating postponement of action due to uncertainty (including the voices of self-interested parties), the prevalence of value neutral analytical tools in policy formation and the inadequacy of our institutions to face the complex and intractable issues involved. This robust book advocates turning up the volume on the ethical dimensions of climate change and undermining self-interest arguments by pointing out that these countries have duties, responsibilities and obligations to others. In this respect, religious leaders and philosophers have a particular role to play.

### **Inspiring Sustainable Behaviour**

by **Oliver Payne**

*Routledge 2012, 180 pp., £24.99, h/b.*

Subtitled '19 ways to ask for change', this is a very unusual book written by an environmentalist with a background in advertising and digital marketing. He brings some of this knowledge to bear by using a combination of marketing psychology, environmental psychology, behavioural decision theory and behavioural economics. He observes that global warming is a paradigmatic example of a problem that people don't care about because its effects are distant in four dimensions: not here, not now, not me and not clear. Many of the solutions involve downsizing or cutting consumption, which is politically awkward. So Payne comes up with the idea of using context dependency to frame questions in a constructive way. For instance, children who are asked if they want fruit or fruit juice will say yes 90% of the time while only 60% will make a choice if no one asks them. The 19 chapters each outline a different, highlighting the need to use the right words and images and the right incentive, as well as asking for a commitment and asking in the right order. It is full of quirky information and provides a new take on an old chestnut.

### **100% Renewable**

edited by **Peter Droege**

*Routledge 2012, 326 pp., £25, p/b.*

An ambitious volume edited by the President of Eurosolar setting out the case for a 100% renewable energy system and showing how we can get there if we take the aim seriously. The authors do not underestimate the challenge but feel that any lesser target will dilute our efforts towards building a world based on sustainable use of renewable power. There are examples of already economically viable schemes working with available technology. One major shift is from centralised production to smart grids representing energy democracy. Action is required on many levels - household, community and government, especially with the continuing migration from town to city, which will give an opportunity for new ecological designs to be implemented. Eurosolar has given an annual prize since 1994 awarded to models for a renewable energy-based Europe, a climate-stable, energy sustainable and a socially just, democratic world.

### **Energy**

by **Jose Goldemberg**

*Oxford University Press 2012, 167 pp., \$16.95, p/b.*

The author is eminently qualified to write this highly informative and accessible book as former Rector of the University of São Paulo and Secretary of State for both science and technology and the environment in Brazil. It consists of answers to a number of basic questions, beginning with basic concepts and

moving on to present energy use and the emerging alternatives, with a discussion of renewables as well as nuclear power. Goldemberg goes on to analyse the problems of the present energy system including exhaustion of fossil fuels and energy security, as well as environmental problems and energy costs. The last section deals with technical solutions and policies - energy efficiency and new technologies, before concluding with non-technical solutions and the relationship between energy and lifestyle.

### **Islands Beyond the Horizon**

by **Roger Lovegrove**

*Oxford University Press 2012, 228 pp., £16.99, h/b.*

Roger Lovegrove was director of RSPB in Wales for 27 years. His love affair with islands began at the age of 16 when his parents sent him off for the week to Skokholm island off the coast of Wales. Here he gathers his experience of 20 islands around the world, narrating their history, geography and wildlife. Quite frequently, humans have had a devastating impact on these islands, but we are now much more aware of the need to sustain their life. Nearer to home the story of St Kilda, whose last inhabitants abandoned the island in 1930, leaving it entirely to the seabirds. There are a number of photographs, mainly black and white, in the book, which could have benefited from a more accessible layout. It may encourage a few more people to visit these islands, but hopefully not too many given their unique character.

### **The Sociology of Food and Agriculture**

by **Michael Carolan**

*Routledge 2012, 315 pp., £24.99, p/b.*

An informative textbook indicative of the social issues raised by agricultural practice and the food system. It covers the development of agriculture under capitalism and the transformation of farming practices from small scale to a globalised industrial system. This has meant enormous changes in rural employment and the concentration of immense market power in multinationals who are seeking to control the entire food supply. The book looks critically at a wide range of topics including food security, international trade and subsidies, food and culture, food sovereignty and local versus global. It is set out in a clear format for students.

### **Organic Agriculture for Sustainable Livelihoods**

by **Niels Halberg and Adrian Muller**

*Routledge 2012, 280 pp., £29.99, p/b.*

As anyone who studies the matter will be aware, the current food system is both inadequate and unsustainable, with continuing widespread food insecurity as well as obesity. There is also a battle of discourse going on about pathways towards sustainable and sufficient food production, especially given the need to increase production while improving sustainability. One school seeks further intensification based on external inputs, while the other, acknowledging the need for intensification, argues that it should be based on a better application of agro-ecological principles and local knowledge. The focus of this book is whether organic agriculture can improve food security and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers while preserving natural capital and enhancing ecosystem services at the same time. It explains the principles of organic agriculture and advocates an approach based on a combination of modern science and traditional knowledge. A number of case studies are included and research needs identified in different parts of the world, especially Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. Although the book is relatively technical, its message is empowering.



**Whole Earth?****by Mark Edwards, Lloyd Timberlake***Still Pictures Moving Words Ltd 2012, 88 pp., £12, p/b.*

Some readers may already be acquainted with the Hard Rain project, an exhibition that has been seen by 15 million people at over 100 venues around the world. This new book explains how to align human and natural systems, arguably the major task of our time, at least according to Thomas Berry. The necessary tasks are specified and explained various sections including the need to build or rebuild cities to make them more habitable for the next 2 billion people. We also need to produce twice as much food without using any more land or water, redefine prosperity, increase empathy and rebuild democracy. All this is a tall order, but essential for a truly sustainable civilisation. The book is very clearly set out with text on one side and corresponding photograph (pl) by Mark Edwards on the other. Later in the book there are a series of suggested actions that the reader can take to make a personal contribution.

**The Moon Gardener****by Peter Berg***Temple Lodge Publishing 2012, 128 pp., £16.99, p/b.*

This must be the definitive book on biodynamic gardening - the author was closely connected with Maria Thun and has many decades of experience. It is beautifully illustrated, and takes the reader through all the essential principles including foundations, soil, biodynamic preparations, compost, crop rotation, cultivation, plant protection and saving your seed. I had not previously thought of the soil preparations as a form of homoeopathy, since they are prepared along similar lines to human medicines. There are some interesting soil indicator plants, and I noted that creeping buttercup likes damp or waterlogged soil, which is exactly what has happened to our fields over the last two wet summers! There is very good advice on preparing compost - I now know that we should have a cover on ours; also on controlling weeds.

**Weeds and What They Tell Us****by Ehrenfried Pfeiffer***Floris Books 2012, 96 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

The author was a pioneer of biodynamic farming in the USA, and knows a thing or two about weeds. His philosophy is that weeds represent our failure to master the soil, and that they grow abundantly where we have made mistakes. They are able to resist conditions that cultivated plants cannot resist. The three major groups are those living on acid soil, those indicating a crust formation and those that follow human steps and cultivation. In my own case the last two wet summers, especially this one, have led to an enormous proliferation of buttercups in our grazing fields. This seems to be due to acidification through standing water. I will have to resort to some kind of drastic action next year! For gardeners, there is also some good advice on weeds in compost heaps.

**The Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar 2012****by Maria & Matthias Thun***Floris Books 2012, 64 pp., £6.99, p/b.*

Maria Thun died in February this year after completing more than 50 years working on this calendar. This year's edition contains reproductions of two paintings by her husband, including *Crossing to the Other Shore* representing death as a transition. Her work and its origins are described, including early experiments on growing radishes by planting them at different times. The body of the book contains the calendar with guidance for the best time to plant and harvest, with accompanying charts of the moon.

**When Wine Tastes Best***Floris Books 2012, 48 pp., £3.99, p/b.*

Using the same principles of the lunar cycle through different constellations, this book reproduces the charts but with reference to wine. It turns out that the best days to drink wine are Flower and Fruit days, although older bottles are less affected. Two large supermarkets only hold tastings on these days, and three wine critics are quoted as saying that the difference in the same wines on different days is quite marked. I haven't yet tried this myself. There is also an iPhone app for those who are interested.

**Keopf's Practical Biodynamics****by Herbert H. Koepf***Floris Books 2012, 164 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

Herbert Koepf was a pioneer of biodynamics in Germany and elsewhere. This is a short handbook summarising his findings with a wealth of practical advice. He explains that the biodynamic method treats the ecological system as an organism, part of which is the soil. He has a lot of experience with soil structure, and explains how best to build a living soil. Other chapters discuss the quality of produce, methods of composting, preparation of biodynamic sprays and research methods along with some results from his studies. Books like this remind us of the parallels between plant and human health, and also all the rhythms of life as a process in time regulated by both the earthly and cosmic environments.

**Sustainability****by Ulrich Grober***Green Books 2012, 220 pp., £14.95, p/b.*

This brilliant and erudite book shows that sustainability is deeply rooted in many previous cultures that were not obsessed with growth. Goethe is an important figure and is quoted as saying, 'baked bread is tasty and satisfying for one day. But flour cannot be sown and seedcorn should not be ground.' As it happens, Goethe was involved at the time in a huge re-forestation programme that called for a sustainable management plan. The pillars of sustainability were first defined by Hans Karl von Carlowitz in terms of environmental equilibrium, economic security and social justice. His original German word was *nachhaltig*, and it is interesting to learn that the first use of the word *environment* was a translation by Carlyle of Goethe's word *Umgebung* when the latter had been thinking about support for the economy of nature rather than the subjugation of nature. The word *ecology* seems to have been coined by Ernst Haeckel in the 1860s, where he defined it as the science of nature's household or the relations of the organism to the environment. The more modern use of the word *sustainability* dates from the Club of Rome report on the limits of growth in 1972, while the word *biodiversity* was coined by EO Wilson in 1985. At the end of the book, the author suggests his own litmus tests for sustainability in terms of reducing the ecological footprint and widening access to good quality of life. He also adds a number of his own experiences to the fascinating narrative. No one will think about sustainability in the same way after reading this book.

**Measuring Wellbeing****by Karen Scott***Routledge 2012, 210 pp., £29.99, p/b. £90, h/b.*

Well-being is now on the political agenda, along with sustainable development, but the two are not always compatible, as this book shows. It arises from the author's experience on a local level in helping create quality-of-life indicators at a time when Richard Layard's book on happiness was published with its emphasis on subjective wellbeing. The approach of welfare economics is to try to measure everything and there have been recent attempts to go beyond the criteria of unsustainable economic growth. It focuses on four areas: theoretical concepts, tensions between human well-being and sustainable development as well as between individual and

social notions of well-being, forms of participatory governance and the nature of indicators and their role in policies designed to promote well-being. The second part of the book reports on a case study in Blythe Valley. It brings a wider lens to the whole debate, by reminding people on the local level that there are also overarching global, intergenerational and ecological issues. On a lighter note, she recounts the Nigerian joke where a man is told by a restaurant owner that his grandfather has paid for his meal. Just as he is leaving after eating his full, he is asked to pay for his grandchildren.

## EDUCATION

### **Generation WTF**

by **Christine B. Whelan, PhD**

*Templeton Press 2011, 278 pp., p/b.*

An excellent and down-to-earth guide for 18-25s to help get them on track, written by a young professor who teaches the social psychology of self-development. The downturn has put enormous pressure on young people who can no longer expect it to be easy to find a job and get a foot on the career ladder. Already, UCAS forms and personal statements demand the exceptional, as many candidates have similar results. Hence the importance of developing your capacity. Unusually, the book draws on research with a group of testers and has a resource website – [www.generationwtf.com](http://www.generationwtf.com). WTF becomes the structure of the book – Wise, Tenacious, Fearless. The book has many useful exercises on the way, beginning with identifying key values and becoming honest with oneself. Then we move on to goal-setting, the importance of self-control and the challenge of procrastination. Thrift is a key theme for the John Templeton Foundation and hence the Templeton Press, but here it is applied not only to money but the ways in which we use our time. Some classic books are summarised along the way and the concluding chapter is a launch pad for further committed action. Highly recommended, especially to young people forging their own path in life.

### **How to Get What you Want**

by **Nina Grunfeld**

*Walker Books, 2012, 158 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

Nina Grunfeld is founder of Life Clubs, and this is her book specifically aimed at teenagers about how to make the most of themselves. A central tool is the balance chart consisting of love and relationships, home, creativity, health and fitness, rest and relaxation, friends and social life, work and college, family, money and spirituality. Each of these can be assessed for a mark out of 10 to help young people see what aspects of their lives they need to be paying more attention to. The book is very well set out and vividly illustrated. The main chapters embody the structure of the book in terms of 10 areas: identity, goals, focus, confidence, communication, organisation, creativity, change, balance and success. The reader is taken through a methodical process in simple, easy to follow steps. It makes a very good follow-up to my school values programme as it encourages a greater depth of systematic reflection. I would highly recommend it to any reader with a teenage child.

### **Conversations with God for Teens**

by **Neale Donald Walsch**

*Hay House 2012, 236 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

I had hoped to find a teen to review this book, but they are all too busy! Many readers will be familiar with Walsch's other work – I review his latest book elsewhere in this issue. Here he takes as a starting point questions sent in to him by teenagers and opens them up for discussion. Naturally, the dialogue and content is similar but put in a very direct way. It seems to me to be a liberating and challenging read.

### **Storytelling For Life**

by **Josie Felce**

*Floris Books 2012, 135 pp., £14.99, p/b.*

The author draws on her experience as a Waldorf teacher to explain the importance of stories and storytelling. The stories have to be internalised and reproduced if they are to make an impression; just reading one out loud does not engage the listener the same way. Part of the charm of the book lies in the stories that are told, including the cracked pot, the tree at the crossroads and 17 camels. This last one tells the story of a man who left his camels to his three sons in proportions of half, one third and one ninth. They could not work this out with 17 camels so a traveller lent them his camel to help them make the division. Of course, these proportions present no problem with 18 camels and, if you add nine, six and two, this makes 17! The sons laughed when they gave back the camel, and they were all happy. Besides the stories themselves, there are chapters on stories for different age groups and stages of life, including the hero's and heroine's journey. An inspiring and instructive book.

### **Zombies on Kilimanjaro**

by **Tim Ward**

*John Hunt Publishing 2011, 230 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

This is a powerful and moving narrative about a father-son journey above the clouds climbing Kilimanjaro. The message of the book is one of openness, honesty and integrity in the relationship between fathers and sons – crucially, admitting the vulnerability of the human condition. This is made all the more poignant by the reflections of the author about his relationship with his own father, which is resolved towards the end of the book. We rarely have a full understanding of the pressures faced by our fathers and may judge them over-harshly as a result; all the more so, when divorce, rebellion and old grudges lurk beneath the surface. Forgiveness is essential if we are to be able to move on, as the book demonstrates. The journey itself is also gruelling but immensely worthwhile, a cathartic rite of passage that will have changed the relationship for good. It is also important to remember that the condition of Kilimanjaro is a message about climate change – its snowcap has already disappeared.

### **Leadingship**

by **Arnold Timmerman**

*John Hunt Publishing 2011, 94 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

A new word for an approach to leadership based on authenticity and passion as our emotional compass. The author uses the term copy-paste as a contrast to authenticity and relates a number of incidents highlighting the illusion of being in control and in charge. Instead, it proposes a process of self-enquiry as a means of reaching inspiration and arriving at the truth for oneself rather than second-hand. Then one feels fully alive. He relates an entertaining episode when he was in the mindset of control of his dog, and his dog was in fact completely out of control, mirroring his inner fear and state. Only when he let go of this did the dog start behaving normally again. The reader is left with the interesting question of what kind of life one would create if everything were swept away and one had to begin again with new authenticity and passion.

### **Making Geometry**

by **Jon Allen**

*Floris Books 2012, 136 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

This is a follow-up practical book to *Drawing Geometry*, and the author explains how to construct models of Platonic and Archimedian solids, using paper cutouts. There are diagrams of the many solids and discussions of the principles behind them. The instructions and illustrations are very clear and could be used in the classroom.

**Changeology****by Les Robinson***Green Books 2012, 272 pp., £14.95, p/b.*

Our social immune system seems to make us resistant to change in many respects. The author has formulated his experience of social activism into a method to generate effective social change, of which he gives relevant examples. He begins by questioning a number of assumptions, including that beliefs are consistent with behaviour and the distorting lenses of thinking that people are bad or that heroic agents are required. He proposes six ingredients for generating constructive change: start a buzz of conversation, offer hope in a frustrating situation, create an enabling environment, design a sticky solution, expand people's comfort zones and find the right instigator or inviter. The analysis is informed by a sophisticated understanding of human nature drawing on social science research. The structure of hope is found to have five key components: self-esteem, autonomy, competence, relatedness and security, all of which are worth taking into account in formulating plans for change. An important and highly informative book.

**GENERAL****We are the Dead****selected and introduced by David Roberts***Red Horse Press, 2012, 224 pp., £25, h/b.*

I have been interested in the First World War for a long time, and was kindly given this book by my French poetry tutor at St Andrews, Ian Higgins, who translated some of the French poets into English. It is a unique book consisting of poems by British, Irish, Canadian, French and German writers. The feature that really enhances the impact of the book is the paintings chosen to accompany the poems. I am familiar with some of the best-known English poems, but not at all with any corresponding paintings, which convey the appalling conditions of the war. For instance, on page 79 there is a moving poem entitled *The Mother*, with a picture of a nurse writing the last message of a dying soldier –

'We suffer in their coming and their going;  
And though I grudge them not, I weary, weary  
Of the long sorrow – And yet I have my joy:  
My sons were faithful, and they fought.'

For readers with a serious interest in this subject, I can also recommend David Roberts' *Minds at War*, which brings together the testimony of contemporary poets, leading commentators and politicians, generals and ordinary people. The reader is taken through the war and its development, including themes such as trench warfare, the wounded, dying and dead, those who refused to fight, the end of the war and the peace. There is also a glossary and brief lives of key figures.

**Vision Leben****by Schweisfurth-Stiftung***Schweisfurth-Stiftung 2012.*

The main text of this book is in German, but there is an English pamphlet reflecting on the Foundation's 25 years of service to organic agriculture and food culture. We organised our meeting in Berlin in 2009 with the Foundation, and here one can read about the work they have accomplished and projects they have supported, as well as the people who have been involved. It is a beautifully produced book with many photos.

**For The Sender****by Alex Woodard***Hay House Publishing 2012, 122 pp., \$11.99, p/b.*

An unusual book with an accompanying CD based on the idea that the author would write a song for anyone who pre-ordered his self titled release. Nothing much happened, but in the meantime his dog died. At this point, he received a letter from Emily reflecting his own sense of loss, but also a sense of love and gratitude. Every autumn she wrote a letter to her dead partner, and this has turned into a song. The title embodies the realisation that the letter and song are more for the sender – a lyrical reflection.

**Trust: A Very Short Introduction****by Katherine Hawley***Oxford University Press 2012, 121 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

In my work with young people, I found that trust was the most valued quality. In this lucid and stimulating introduction to the philosophy of trust, the author combines her analytical and practical skills to help the reader reflect on trust in an everyday context. She begins by illustrating how important trust is in everyday life, but also highlights the importance of distrust and the quality of trustworthiness, which she regards as a matter of living up to our commitments and promises. She goes on to discuss why trust and trustworthiness matter, relating this to social capital. The evolution of trust is also important, and many scientific studies have been carried out to assess levels of trust. Honesty and dishonesty are of trust and distrust (or mistrust), while the competence implied by knowledge and expertise are also important factors. The discussion is brought up to date with some interesting reflections related to the Internet, such as trust in Wikipedia, online dating and customer reviews. A key point is not just the accuracy of the information but also the intent or motivation of the author. Unless we are aware of the possibility of distortion, we may take character assassination at face value. Finally, there are questions relating to trust in institutions and nations, and the controversial stance taken by conspiracy theorists. Altogether, there is much food for thought.

**DEATH AND DYING****The Audible Life Stream****by Alistair Conwell***O Books 2010, 255 pp., £11.99, p/b.*

It is often said that the ultimate spiritual practice is the secret of dying while living, as advocated by many spiritual teachers as well as Socrates. The title *Audible Life Stream* or *Primordial Sound Current* is argued to be a stream of conscious vibrating energy with an enchanting musical quality that is occasionally experienced in heightened states of awareness. There is a tendency in the West to focus on the sense of sight, but there is an alternative tradition concentrating on sound, including the work of Tomatis and the late Network Member JD Solomon. The music of the spheres or similar phenomena is experienced in NDEs. The Word is also a sound. Initiates are those who have consciously experienced the processes of death and the departure from the physical body; they are also aligned with and emanate this divine vibratory energy. The way of developing this capacity is through silent meditation, where the attention is focused inwards on the Wisdom or Third Eye and correspondingly withdrawn from the 'normal outward and downward flow' to the senses. In this way, the real meaning of dying daily is to practice a withdrawal of consciousness to the Wisdom Eye every day and listen to the Voice of the Silence. This wide-ranging book makes an important contribution to the field.