



books in brief

David Lorimer

SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Shapes

by Philip Ball

Oxford University Press 2009, 312 pp., £9.99, p/b.

This is the first of three books on the patterns of nature. Its starting point is the great work by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson *On Growth and Form*, which Sir Peter Medawar regarded as the finest piece of scientific literature. The author writes that science has imitated Thompson's approach of searching of universal physical causes of pattern and order, 'offering us a glimpse of the kind of natural harmony that pervades and structure of the whole world.' He defines a pattern as a form in which particular features recur recognisably and regularly, created from groups of these features. The book ranges over a wide variety of forms, exploring the broad principles that underpin the formation of patterns such as shells, beehives, pine cones and even the human body.

Flow

by Philip Ball

Oxford University Press 2009, 188 pp., £9.99, p/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 and the movements of animals and people. There are chapters on water, sand dunes and the movement of large numbers, 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.

Branches

by Philip Ball

Oxford University Press 2009, 221 pp., £9.99, p/b.

The third in a trilogy of books about Nature's patterns, many of which are fractal - showing the same pattern at different scales in what Ball calls the self-made tapestry. He covers the symmetry of snowflakes, the shape of cracks and a corresponding branches of rivers, patterns in branches and leaves and the tapestry of webs. The overall effect of the book is to make one far more aware of the intricate patterns that surround us and which can also be discerned at the molecular level. Life inherently creates order and has what the author calls an irrepressible tendency to crystallise

forms of order far from equilibrium. The book is enriched with many black-and-white photos and a small section of spectacular plates in full colour.

Sensitive Crystallization

by Christian Marcel

Floris Books 2011, 101 pp., £14.99, p/b.

This is an excellent introduction to the process of sensitive crystallisation, giving historical origins and a detailed description of the process itself, while explaining the underlying idea of formative forces in Nature. Crystallisation is produced with the preparation of 10% copper chloride, adding the substance to be tested and allowing it to evaporate into a pattern that can subsequently be photographed. Some chapters focus on contrasting patterns produced by conventional and biodynamic cultivation, while others focus on different types and ages of wine. It is striking that the most harmonious patterns correspond to good wine at its peak, while poor wine and wine past its peak begins to lose its structure. This also applies to cooking methods, especially the effect on structure of microwaving. Thus the visual images reinforce the argument of the book.

The Language of Genetics

by Denis R. Alexander

Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd. 2011, 320 pp., p/b.

Some readers may be familiar with Denis Alexander's work at the interface between science and religion, currently as director of the Faraday Institute in Cambridge. Here he provides a highly readable introduction to the whole field of genetics without presupposing any technical knowledge or background expertise. He runs through genes and information, genetic variations, genes and evolution and the genetic basis of disease. He also covers the impact of epigenetics, which has brought a much more complex understanding to the field. Although he regards the term genetic engineering is an unfortunate one, he discusses the processes that underlie it and possible applications in medicine, animal breeding and plants. Here he puts his money on potential improvement in plant roots. He also surveys the relative uptake of GM agriculture worldwide but says little about the political agenda underlying this process, namely total control of the world food supply. Finally, he considers the role of genes in informing the big questions of life involving identity, God and evolution.

MEDICINE/HEALTH

Panic on a Plate

by Rob Lyons

Imprint Academic 2011, 119 pp., £8.95, p/b.

While one might sympathise with the idea that fears about food have been blown out of all proportion and are being used to attempt to control people's eating habits, the overall

argument of this book is somewhat perverse. The current food system is not fit for purpose for a number of reasons. Out of a total population of 6.9 billion, 1 billion are still severely undernourished, while at least 1.3 billion are overweight. This situation gives rise to a new set of concerns, and the drivers of the food industry are in fact responsible for both imbalances. It is not true to say that things have never been this good, as the overall trajectory is that we have moved from diseases of undernutrition to diseases of civilisation which are taking a huge toll on human health. Despite what the author claims, the food industry is the main culprit, and it is simply disingenuous to explain nutritional concerns as a form of anti-capitalism. Equally perverse is the chapter on the 'wacky world of organic food' as a retreat from the modern world and the idea that junk food is a contradiction in terms. The author sees this in political terms, arguing that the division between junk food and real food is a reflection of middle-class angst and old-fashioned snobbery. The fact that white bread still outsells brown bread is a measure of ignorance, but then the author would dismiss me as exactly the kind of snob he excoriates, someone who eats 'a dreadful permutation of local, organic, minimally processed food.' This may be provocative, but it is also perverse.

PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION

Christian Gnosis

by **Charles W Leadbeater**

Quest Books 2011, 320 pp., \$16.95, p/b.

Charles Leadbeater was a prominent Theosophist who was also a Bishop in the Liberal Catholic Church as well as a clairvoyant. This combination makes for interesting reading, and the book is divided into three parts: the divine plan of evolution, the inner teaching of early Christianity and an examination of various Christian themes. The first part describes involution as well as evolution and contains a complex chart of the constitution of the human being on the various levels of reality. Reincarnation is seen as the process of evolution and Christ as an ultimate exemplar. There is an interesting chapter on the origin of the Creation which includes a formula of Cosmogogenesis ostensibly taught by Christ to his disciples, that is to those people who could understand the inner meaning of his teaching. This leads on to a theological consideration of different elements of the creed, including the startling claim that the dates of Christ's life are 105 years out, and that he was stoned rather than crucified. Leadbeater's perspective is that the Gospel has been transformed from 'a perfectly reasonable allegory into an absurd human biography.' This in no way demeans the symbolism of the cross, however. There are interesting explanations of the sacraments, our Lady and the communion of saints, as well as the important distinction between exoteric and esoteric. The final chapter sets out a rational creed, belief in God as love and power and truth and light, belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and belief in service.

Why Things Matter

by **David M Black**

Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group 2011, 202 pp., £22.99, p/b.

This is an interdisciplinary looking at the place of values in science, psychoanalysis and religion. We often read that

science can be value-free, but this is a cultural illusion. Rather than use the vocabulary of consciousness, the author prefers the term subjectivity, a term which has also been excluded from scientific discourse. The existence of subjects implies uniqueness and cannot be contained within physics. A key chapter differentiates empathy from sympathy and makes sympathy the ultimate basis for perception of moral value since it enables us to recognise others as subjects of experience. The goal of religion is defined as the achievement of a true view of the universe and our relationship to it. This implies a psychoanalytic 'position' or disposition towards the world, the self and other people. This leads the author to question the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, remarking that both subjective and objective accounts are necessary. After a detour into Freud's death drive, Black outlines what he calls the contemplative position which is not transcendent in the traditional sense because we cannot escape from what Varela called the intrinsic circularity in cognitive science. All this leads to a final chapter on the basis of responsible commitment, a commitment that lies beyond rationality in being intentionally circular, as Michael Polanyi pointed out: 'any enquiry into our ultimate beliefs and can be consistent only if it presupposes its own conclusions.' An uncomfortable observation, but nevertheless true. The book provides a corrective to the underestimation of subjectivity and feeling in a purely scientific analysis.

Politics and the Occult

by **Gary Lachman**

Quest Books 2008, 276 pp., \$19.95, p/b.

The link implied by the title of this book is not always apparent on the surface, but there has been a long tradition of applying esoteric idealism to practical politics. A good deal of modern literature has focused on the dark side of fascism, but this book shows that there is an alternative and more progressive, politics which ran through the Knights Templar and inspired the French and American revolutions. The impressive range of figures considered in the book include Annie Besant, Emanuel Swedenborg, Rudolf Steiner and Mircea Eliade along with other historical figures. The underlying theme is the translation of gnosis or a sense of cosmic consciousness into a radical political programme, and this gives rise to countless movements; then there is also the application of right-wing fundamentalism in the US, which would define anything occult as diabolical. In the end, the author comes out against any attempts from left or right to impose an ideal on a changing society. We now realise how violence produces more violence, but this insight will not be generalised overnight. In this sense, one arrives at the more pragmatic stance of Sir Karl Popper and Sir Isaiah Berlin. Freedom implies tolerance of less than ideal conditions and there can be no recipe for an ideal society.

God, Sex, and Gender - an Introduction

by **Adrian Thatcher**

Blackwell Publishing 2011, 271 pp., £19.99, p/b.

Although designed as an introduction for theology students, this is a really remarkable book covering a whole range of sensitive subjects in a deeply humane fashion. The author nails his own liberal views to the mast, but explains the pros and cons of various arguments as he goes along. He also suggests a number of activities and provides his own comments by way of elucidation. The book begins with a thorough explanation of the terms sex, gender and theology,

explaining the way in which ideas about sex and gender have evolved, from the Greeks onwards. The Greeks really only recognised one gender, man, while many other cultures subordinated women to men and some still do. Theology is considered with respect to Scripture, tradition and reason. The second and third parts deal with the theology of sex and gender, discussing the nature of last, frameworks for sex, Christ as the bridegroom, the gender of God and the role of Mary. The following parts discuss the theology of same-sex love and learning to love, looking at celibacy, chastity, contraception and the development of a more inclusive theology for sexual minorities. These issues have caused huge controversy within the churches, and are sensitively and sensibly dealt with by the author. For instance, the claim that the Bible is unequivocal in its condemnation of same-sex love does not stand up to scrutiny. The message is more subtle and nuanced, although it is always possible to select particular passages to reinforce your argument. The value of the book lies in its treatment of the unprecedented changes in sexual and gender relationships that have taken place over the last 50 years. Readers are referred not only to tradition and Scripture, but also to their own experience. I cannot recommend the book too highly for those interested in delving into the complexities of the issues raised.

A Brief History of the Soul

by **Stewart Goetz & Charles Taliaferro**

Blackwell Publishing 2011, 228 pp., p/b.

As many readers will be aware, the soul is deeply unfashionable, with books describing the trajectory from soul to self to brain as if the notion is an outdated superstition. This book gives a thorough account of philosophical concepts of the soul, beginning with Greek thought, then moving on to the mediaeval period and what is called Continental thought, with over 30 pages devoted to Descartes. The authors draw on both original texts and authoritative commentaries. The next chapter deals with the empiricists, including Joseph Butler and Thomas Reid, before moving on to Kant. There is a lengthy discussion of the vexed problem of soul-body interaction before a survey of views of the soul in contemporary science and challenges to the soul. This covers neuroscience as well as scientific methodology in considerable detail. Generally, the soul's existence in philosophical terms is affirmed on the basis of first-person experience. Challenges include the ghost in the machine idea and the use of Occam's Razor in relation to the identity question. There are some notable omissions, with no mention of Sir John Eccles and, more seriously, no reference at all to the large literature on survival and reincarnation, all of which has an important bearing on the nature and existence of the soul. So the book remains firmly within orthodox philosophy and science, although within these limits it can be highly recommended.

Wisdom of the Stars

by **Leo de la Houssaye**

Floris Books 2007, 223 pp., p/b.

An original book covering the history of astrology in different cultures down the ages and based on a great deal of reading. The author is an Anthroposophist and introduces what for me was a new concept of the spiritual birth chart corresponding to the time of death. The author analyses a number of famous people, including Pascal and Michelangelo, with particular reference to the position of planets like Saturn in the chart. He writes that the cosmos

is in a state of anticipation when a human being dies, since this releases into the universe the moral substance gained by that person from their earthly experience. There are further studies of figures such as Henry Dunant, Solovyov, Raphael and Florence Nightingale. It is a fascinating thought that our lives might nourish the cosmos.

Atlantis in the Amazon

by **Richard Wingate**

Bear & Company Publishing 2011, 168 pp., \$16, p/b.

An intriguing tale originating with an Italian priest, Father Carlo Crespi, coming to Ecuador in 1923. There he was shown an amazing treasure by the native Shuar people, consisting not only of items from other parts of the world, but also strange machines pointing towards a technologically sophisticated civilisation in the past. The author argues that the civilisation responsible for these artefacts was Atlantis. He draws on Scriptures, postulating a type of nuclear war leading to the destruction of Atlantis and the abandonment of dangerous technologies. However, one should remember that it is human beings who use these technologies and that wisdom consists in being able to use them appropriately. The reader will find the illustrated artefacts fascinating, whatever the view they take of the overall argument.

What is This thing Called Metaphysics?

by **Brian Garrett**

Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group 2011, 166 pp., £17.99, p/b.

Second edition of this excellent introduction to metaphysics aimed principally at university students but which can profitably be read by the general reader new to the subject. The usual range of subjects is covered, namely God, identity, causation, time, free will, truth and ways of knowing. The exposition of the ideas is particularly clear, with a detailed arguments and objections pertaining, for instance, to the existence of God. This enables readers to understand the detail, and there are suggestions for study questions and further reading. There are also brief biographies and summaries of the arguments of the main thinkers throughout the text. Highly recommended.

On Being One

by **John Davidson (SMN)**

Science of the Soul Research Centre 2010, 191 pp., h/b.

A short and beautifully written book about the relationship between science and mysticism, distilled from both reading and experience. John wrote a number of books about science over 20 years ago, and has devoted his time since then to more intensive study of mystical texts. He remarks that while science is the study of matter by mind, mysticism is the exploration of consciousness by consciousness. Both are therefore looking at the same universe from a different perspective, and both are dedicated to the quest for truth. The book is divided into three parts, first the story of the perennial philosophy, then its context in everyday life, and finally the story of science within the context of the One Spirit whose immanent presence pervades the universe. As readers will be aware, a science with an inherent spiritual perspective would look very different. A key issue is whether one identifies oneself with this One or thinks of oneself as an independent entity. Becoming aware of the presence of the One within oneself extends this sense of identity. This corresponds to a different way of knowing, what John calls

climbing the Axis of Being within ourselves. This is the eternal quest, and if we can realise it we are never apart from the One.

The Spirit of Modern India

by Robert A McDermott & V.S. Naravane

Lindisfarne Books 2010, 313 pp., £22.50, p/b.

A new edition of a book first published in 1974 giving some essential background in Indian philosophy, religion and culture. I had not realised that Radhakrishnan's history of Indian philosophy was the first such volume - his idealism was influenced not only by his native tradition, but also by his training through reading the works of Hegel and late 19th-century British idealists like Bradley. I have a complete shelf of his work and remember finding his *Idealist View of Life* when I first came to London and paid a visit to Foyles in the mid-1970s. The volume covers philosophy, Dharma, Karma yoga, aesthetics, education, spiritual discipline and national consciousness, with speeches given on Independence Day by Nehru, Radhakrishnan and Sri Aurobindo. Other thinkers featured include Gandhi, Vivekananda, Coomaraswamy, Tagore and Krishnamurti. As such, the volume represents an excellent introduction to modern Indian thought and a point of departure for further study.

Suicide. All You Need To Know

by Richard Simonetti

Roundtable Publishing 2010, 174 pp., p/b.

The subtitle of this book – all you need to know, causes and consequences - is pretty arresting. The perspective is that of a Brazilian spiritist following the teachings of Allan Kardec, whose classic books were published in the mid-19th century. It begins with a list of well-known figures who have committed suicide, and takes the form of a series of questions and answers exploring the whole topic, starting with effects, moving onto causes and discussing what measures might help prevent suicide. The overall perspective, which I believe to be correct, is that we cannot in fact extinguish our consciousness and that suicide has serious spiritual consequences whatever the motivation. There are many controversial arguments, notably in the discussion of euthanasia, but I did share his view of the fate of suicide bombers, who literally do not know what they are doing - both to themselves and to the others that they involve. The only trouble with this book is that those most likely to need it are least likely to read it, but it would be good for it to be widely read among social workers.

Coffee - Philosophy for Everyone

by Scott F Parker & Michael W Austin

Blackwell Publishing 2011, 247 pp., £11.99, p/b.

A delightful book for philosophically minded coffee drinkers. Of course, philosophy is much older than coffee, but the café culture has been associated with philosophical discussions, especially in Paris. One is reminded the enormous influence of coffee houses in 18th-century London, with an estimated 2,000 establishments. Associated both with conversation and enterprise, they also played a role in encouraging less consumption of alcohol. The book ranges widely over topics in metaphysics, culture, aesthetics (the aroma) and ethics (for instance fair trade). Chapters like 'the unexamined cup is not worth drinking' or references to the grounds of being set the tone, but authors also feel free to mix the personal with the philosophical. An estimated 500 billion cups of

coffee are drunk every year, with Americans leading the way at an average consumption of over 3 cups a day. Coffee culture has spread enormously over the last 25 years with the emergence of large chains and wireless Internet, and this would be a great book to be found in cafés to stimulate further discussion. Philosophically minded coffee drinkers will find the contents of their cup enhanced by the contents of the book.

Whiskey & Philosophy – a Small Batch of Spirited Ideas

by Fritz Allhoff & Marcus P Adams

John Wiley & Sons Ltd 2010, 366 pp., £14.99, p/b.

With a foreword by my old friend whisky writer Charles Maclean, this book lives up to its reference to spirited ideas. I had not realised that the explosion in the popularity of malts was a phenomenon of the last 30 years fuelled by consumer demand and media interest. The book makes a congenial companion to the appreciation of whisky, and it is recommended that one pour oneself a dram on opening the introduction. The editors are both Americans, hence the reader will find more references to bourbon that might normally be the case, but also a chapter on Japanese whisky. Like wine, whisky conveys a sense of culture and place, nowhere more so than with Islay malts. Charles Maclean recommends that we use our nose as much as our palate if we are to appreciate whisky to the fullest, using a glass that narrows at the rim and not adding any ice, which he says closes down the aroma. If you're reading this in the evening, you might just want to check this observation.

Wine & Philosophy - a Symposium on Thinking and Drinking

by Fritz Allhoff

Blackwell Publishing 2008, 308 pp., £14.99, p/b.

Part of the same series, subtitled a symposium on thinking and drinking. The association between wine and philosophy goes right back to its Greek origins with Plato's Symposium. The six parts in this book address the art and culture of wine, tasting and talking about wine, wine and its critics, the beauty of wine, wine and metaphysics, and finally the politics and economic supply. In technical terms, this embraces philosophy of language, perception, aesthetics, metaphysics, ethics and political philosophy, similarly to the volume on Coffee. John Bender writes as a philosopher and wine taster, explaining in some detail the fascinating wine aroma wheel from A.C. Noble, with its astonishing range of fruity vegetative vocabulary used to characterise a range of tastes. The complexity and subtlety of the distinctions made by master tasters is quite astonishing, and is all the more interesting when comparing notes with others. After all, a key point made by all these books is that drinking is essentially a social process.

Cycling - Philosophy for Everyone

by Lennard Zinn

Blackwell Publishing 2010, 273 pp., £11.99, p/b.

The expression 'tour de force' takes on a new meaning with this volume devoted to the relationship between cycling and philosophy as both a sport and an experience. The Tour de France provides the context for a discussion of cycling and suffering and also about the nature of success. Then there are more general transport issues, the health benefits of cycling and the pleasures of riding through the countryside. The metaphors of the journey and steering a path are

explored, with one writer remarking that most of us have gears we never use. Einstein is quoted as saying that 'life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.' Every sport and pastime has something to teach us about life, and cycling is no exception. Enthusiasts will find all kinds of avenues opening up in this book.

The Quest for Hermes Trismegistus

by Gary Lachman

Floris Books 2011, 247 pp., £16.99, p/b.

Beginning with Ficino's work on the *Corpus Hermeticum* in 15th century Florence, this book is a tour de force in the search for a deeper understanding of gnosis. Immensely erudite and continuing the work of GRS Mead and Frances Yates, the book traces the influence of hermetic thinking through different areas of the Western tradition drawing on a wide range of scholarship. It gives the reader quite a different flavour of the development of Western philosophy than would be found in any standard textbook. The thought of Jean Gebser plays a prominent role in highlighting the cultural evolution of consciousness and the rising influence of this kind of thought in our time. Our quest for truth and sound knowledge must be pursued on the widest front and not restricted by narrow assumptions.

Shinto: a Celebration of Life

by Aidan Rankin (SMN)

O Books 2010, 161 pp., £10.99, p/b.

This is a clear and comprehensive introduction to Shinto, with which I imagine that few readers are familiar. The overall argument is that Shinto has an important message for the contemporary world in terms of making us more aware of our social and ecological connections with other people and the natural world. The book revolves around an explanation of three key terms, namely *Kami* as divine presence and life force pervading and connecting everything. *Kannagara* enables us to tune into *Kami* and live in harmony with Nature, while *Musubi* is the principle of organic growth and the cycles of life, representing the continuous process of death and rebirth. In this sense, the current green awakening can be interpreted as an awareness of *Musubi*. The book helps the reader understand our situation by means of a different set of cultural concepts that further enrich our understanding. I was particularly struck by a poem about trees and their significance, referring to the flow of life as growth and not as completion we sometimes forget that we are part of a vast process in both space and time.

Avatar-Philosophy (and Religion) or FAITHEISM

by Edmond Wright

Imprint Academic 2011, 92 pp., £8.95, p/b.

Faitheism is a new word coined by the author, an atheist who rejects the approach of the best-known proponents in dismissing not only the historical record of traditional religions but also the potential of faith itself as an attitude. The book explores the idea of an avatar on the basis of James Cameron's film. This involves bringing imagination back into our lives and the courage to live out the human predicament. He also encourages people to join different religious celebrations. He suggests that faith has to be performed as a myth in real-time, a drama in progress where we all play our avatar parts, very different from the archetypes of Christ and Krishna.

Discovering Camphill

by Robin Jackson

Floris Books 2011, 334 pp., £20, p/b.

The Camphill communities were founded by Karl König and inspired by the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner. They seek to enhance the lives of people with learning disabilities by creating communities in which all contributions are valued and developed, regardless of our capacities. This involves hard work, learning to live together and the study of anthroposophy. There is little general literature on the Camphill movement, so this book is designed to fill the gap and inform those involved in the provision of special needs, giving them examples of inspiring best practice. It puts the movement in a historical context with contributions from Scotland, Norway, South Africa and Vietnam. The spiritual and educational principles are covered, as is the ecological dimension.

Wicked Company

by Philipp Blom

Orion Publishing Group 2011, 361 pp., £25, h/b.

I noticed a review of this book in the Saturday FT. Subtitled 'freethinkers and friendship in pre-revolutionary Paris', it is a brilliant portrait of the age and its leading thinkers especially Holbach and Diderot, but also Voltaire, Rousseau and even David Hume, who spent some considerable time in Paris. The book combines biography with the history of ideas, especially at a time when leading thinkers were emancipating themselves from the power of the Church and started to formulate a materialistic and atheistic philosophy. A key period was the 1760s and especially Holbach's salon, which met regularly every Thursday and Sunday to forge ideas which have come to typify modernity. The narrative is highly engaging, informing the reader about episodes involved in researching the book, for instance trying to find where Holbach and Diderot were buried, and even finding the location of Holbach's house in a completely redesigned city. Network readers may not find this radical materialist philosophy to their liking, but these thinkers performed an essential service of emancipating the human mind from the shackles of mediaeval superstition. We now need to go beyond some of the limitations of the Enlightenment in terms of ways of knowing and the deeper realities of consciousness.

Speciesism, Painism and Happiness

by Richard D. Ryder

Imprint Academic 2011, 156 pp., £8.95, p/b.

This book puts forward a morality for the 21st century, based on the author's previous work. He invented the term speciesism several decades ago and the less felicitous word 'painism' about 20 years ago (neither of these words is yet recognised by the spellchecker!). These ideas have proved very powerful, and are summarised in this book. We do not have the right to exclude non-human animals from consideration, while painism asserts that it is wrong to cause suffering to others (including animals) and that we should not talk about a statistical average of pain and happiness as in the utilitarian contention of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In this sense it is a qualitative rather than quantitative approach asserting our right not to suffer unnecessarily and insisting that the most important criterion is not the quantity of individuals harmed but rather the quantity of pain suffered by those affected individuals. A vigorous and important presentation.

The World as Spirit**by Howard A. Jones (SMN)***O Books 2011, 249 pp., £12, p/b.*

An impressive and erudite study covering many themes explored by Network Members over the years. The first two chapters explore the development of science and the history of the relationship between religion and science. Jones finds both conventional religion and orthodox science wanting. He sympathises with the Dawkins view of the narrowness of dogmatic religion, but advocates a philosophy of spirit rather than matter. He also explains the significance of psychical research and parapsychology, which is usually ignored by mainstream science. A pivotal chapter explores the implications of quantum physics before an analysis of the need for a new philosophy going beyond determinism and materialism by embracing holism and the central idea of a universal spiritual energy or Cosmic Spirit. The third part explores the nature of the soul and elaborates on the implications of the presence of a Cosmic Spirit in philosophy, science, medicine, religion, mysticism, nature and creativity. The author draws on a wide range of reading to illustrate and reinforce his argument, but some small errors creep in like referring to C.J. Jung instead of C.G Jung and describing Evelyn Underhill as a Fellow of King's College, Oxford instead of London. A key figure is Sir Alister Hardy, both as a scientist and explorer of human consciousness. The book also contains an environmental dimension drawing on the work of Thomas Berry as part of the necessary new philosophy. The main premise, with which I am in complete agreement, is that 'our individual consciousness is part of, and resonates with, the universal consciousness of cosmic spirit.' This means that when we think, imagine or act, we are impacting on global consciousness. Readers will be enriched by this wide-ranging exploration of the necessary elements of a new philosophy.

A Taste of Tagore**by Rabindranath Tagore***Green Books 2011, 151 pp., £9.95, p/b.*

This year is the 150th anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet and mystic who was the first Asian to receive the Nobel Prize for literature. There has recently been a festival at Dartington. This book is the ideal introduction to his work, with a perceptive foreword by Deepak Chopra. The volume begins with some thoughts on life, education and art, moving on to a selection of poems, prayers and songs, many taken from his most famous work *Gitanjali*. Then there are contemplations, short reflections and aphorisms such as 'clouds come floating into my life from other days, no longer to shed rain or usher storm, but to give colour to my sunset sky.' A special poem is entitled 100 years from today or 1996, and features the poet sending his greeting to the poet of 100 years hence, beauty transferred across time and the sharing of common experience. If you're not already familiar with Tagore, you should certainly buy this book, which will provide many hours of pleasure.

James Frederick Ferrier: Selected Writings**by Jennifer Keefe***Imprint Academic 2011, 202 pp., £14.95, p/b.*

JF Ferrier was professor of moral philosophy at St Andrews University in the mid-19th century at the time that Andrew Lang was an undergraduate. His lectures were legendary, but his influence has been slight, owing to the fact that he

was developing an unfashionable idealist philosophy. Interestingly, he coined the term epistemology and his main work was on philosophy of consciousness, which makes it all the more relevant to our time. He followed on from Sir William Hamilton and Thomas Reid in an attempt to reconcile Reid with Kant's transcendental idealism. His focus is self-consciousness as the defining feature of humanity, hence his rejection of the Enlightenment project of developing a science of man on the grounds that we are both subject and object.

Destination of the Species**by Michael Meacher***O Books 2010, 244 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

This is an impressive book by the former Secretary of State for the Environment. It is exceptionally well-informed and wide ranging, the result of decades of study and thought. The first part concentrates on the story of humans in the universe, while the second provides a more analytical assessment of the evidence. Among the topics covered are the origins of the universe, fine tuning, evolution and the origin of life, the appearance of life-forms and the human species, and the evolution of spirituality. The main question is the purpose of existence, to which two contrasting answers are given by science and religion. There can be no definitive view, but each generation seeks to address the question as best it can. The structure of each chapter is to consider the relative merits of different models and approaches before discussing the implications at the end. The reader is taken through step-by-step and invited to consider the pros and cons of different positions.

In the second part, the status of religious claims is examined, including the existence of God and the nature of Revelation. Purpose is considered in relation to fine tuning and the author considers it anti-empirical to deny our universal experience of purpose. This leads on to a more general discussion of the shifting understanding of scientific and religious truth, which he sees as powerful explanations at different levels of reality, which are nevertheless flawed if pressed as universal principles. Religion has to be seen as emergent within a wider context of a self-realising universe. The final chapter asks the question 'who then are we?' The answer is both metaphysical and practical when it comes to evolution and the future of the planet. The author brings in our current environmental challenges which threaten to terminate human ascendancy. He sees our ultimate destiny as living creatively and co-operatively within the finely balanced systems of the cosmos rather than an extension of our current power and technological mastery based on competitiveness, greed and self-interest. This will require a far greater application of our spiritual capacity since, as he puts it 'the challenge now for humans is not transform the world, but to transform themselves.'

Being Mystic , In Touch With God**by Betsy Balega***O Books 2011, 181 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

This autobiographical book tells the story of the author's psychic and spiritual development with many examples from other people, including her own premonition of the death of John F. Kennedy. She discusses intuition and spiritual practices of meditation as well as wishes as prayers, where coincidence is confirmation. Some of the cases enable one to understand the mechanics of focused intent similarly to Earl Nightingale's strangest secret that we become we think

about most of the time. Also the importance of gratitude and positive expectation. The more we express gratitude, the more we will receive. She concludes that nothing is impossible when your intention is clear and you cast out all doubt.

The Light Speaks

by **Roxette Denne**

Maven Mark Books 2010, 127 pp., no price given, p/b.

I met the author of this gem of a book a couple of months ago. She listens inwardly and expresses what readers will recognise as universal truths. The voice of *The Light* is direct and inspiring and structure of the book provides an inspiration on one page and a journal space on the other, with the injunction to let the Light in through breathing exercises, and to be in calm, in peace and in one knowing in the Source. The feeling pervading the book is that Love is everywhere and that fear can be removed if one lets the Light come in. The following passages convey the texture and beauty of the book: to be is Joy, Love, Knowing, Happiness, Forgiveness, Fearless-ness. Love is being true to yourself, being true to your belief, being true to the truth as you know it. The Light is the God I Am in Me. For further information see www.mavenmarkbooks.com and the book can be downloaded from www.thelightforlivingnow.com

Many are Called

by **Scott Hahn**

Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd. 2011, 155 pp., £12.99, p/b.

A book exploring the nature of Catholic priesthood in terms of the archetypes that he embodies. The administration of the sacraments is absolutely central, but this book considers the many roles of the spiritual father in terms of provider, mediator, protector, teacher and even judge. As such, it is relevant not only to the Catholic Church itself, but also to readers seeking to understand the more profound significance of the priesthood.

PSYCHOLOGY/PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Around the Outsider

by **Colin Stanley**

O Books 2011, 334 pp., £15.99, p/b.

I imagine that a good many readers will have been influenced in their development by reading Colin Wilson's book *The Outsider*. This was certainly a seminal influence on my thinking in my last year at university, and opened up hitherto unexplored avenues, introducing me to many thinkers who have had a profound influence. This book is a collection of essays presented Colin Wilson on the occasion of his 80th birthday. I also read his books on the Occult and Mysteries, and visited him in Cornwall shortly after the publication of my book *Survival* in 1984, for which he was a publishers reader. In this collection, Network Member Steve Taylor writes about the effect of *The Outsider* on his life. He refers to Wilson's core intuition that there is something wrong with normal human consciousness, when it is in fact a state of disconnection and alienation that must be transcended in order to achieve a greater sense of harmony and interconnection. I was also struck by his second book, much less well-known, *Religion and the Rebel*, which introduced me to Spengler, Toynbee and Whitehead. I also

discovered Hermann Hesse and used to encourage my pupils at Winchester to read at least one of his novels every year. Wilson readers will find much of interest to explore in this volume.

Dreamed up Reality

by **Bernardo Kastrup**

O Books 2011, 190 pp., £10.99, p/b.

A fascinating scientific and philosophical discussion of the primacy of consciousness and the ways in which thoughts create our reality. The author proceeds through a series of experiments and reflections to show that our picture of reality is a self-fulfilling loop - in the case of materialism, all we see around us seems to confirm our view but we are unaware of the way we create and fulfil this assumption. Through his experiments, the author seeks to deconstruct the filtering mechanisms of the brain to arrive at the realisation that consciousness is non-local field phenomenon not caused by but rather coupled to the brain. He comes to the conclusion that reality is the unfolding of the thought pattern in the imagination and that thought patterns are the underlying building blocks of everything experienced. Kant would agree. He concludes that everything one knows is a projection of the psyche and that everything is in and of mind. He also links this to fractals and computer simulations - a subtle and profound book which will interest all readers exploring the deeper nature of consciousness.

The Three "Only" Things

by **Robert Moss**

New World Library 2007, 261 pp., \$14.95, p/b.

The author is a pioneer of Active Dreaming, and this book focuses on tapping into the power of dreams, coincidence and imagination. We often say that something is only a dream or only a coincidence, but this may miss the point. The book is structured around these three themes, with nine powers of dreaming, nine rules of coincidence and seven open secrets of imagination. Each section demonstrates that reality is more than it appears, and that there are deeper forces at work. For instance, in dreaming we can solve problems, understand ourselves through symbolism, become more creative and even avoid danger - several instances of precognitive dreams are cited. Under coincidence, the author shows how thoughts are actions that produce effects and that there are patterns to be understood if only we can see them. Every setback can offer an opportunity. The third section explores the imagination and the way we live by images and vision. A strong imagination can produce correspondingly strong results. All this helps us enlarge our stories and live our lives in a wider and deeper context. These ideas are made more real by the many examples given.

FUTURE STUDIES/ECONOMICS/ECOLOGY

Jilted Generation

by **Ed Howker & Shiv Malik**

Icon Books Ltd 2010, 246 pp., £8.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'how Britain has bankrupted its youth', this is a polemical but informative analysis of the plight of young people born since 1979. The baby boomer generation got a free education and have made a fortune in property over the

last 30 years. They will also not be too badly off on pensions compared with coming generations. The current generation of graduates starts with a debt of some £17,500, which will soon rise to over £30,000 with the impending hike in tuition fees. Add to this the enormous cost of first homes and the need to raise a 25% down payment, and you have a position where many young people in their 20s are still living at home and can't afford to move out - in 2009 29% of men and 18% of women aged 20 to 34 were living with their parents. This puts considerable strain on family relationships. Graduates are also finding it more difficult to secure employment, which will enable them to begin paying back their debt. Unemployment is now disproportionately affecting the under 24s. The book looks at four main areas: housing, jobs, inheritance and politics. A number of acronyms have grown grown-up, like KIPPERS (kids in parents' pockets eroding retirement savings) and iPods (insecure, pressurised, overtaxed and debt ridden). The section on politics highlights, like Richard Layard, the damage done to social cohesion by the unbridled encouragement of individualism and short-term interests. The overall picture is chilling, and adds to the consequences of changing demographics with an older population being supported by the younger generation. But what if many young people can't find gainful employment? The book should be compulsory reading for politicians of all shades.

Wild Law

by **Cormac Cullinan**

Green Books 2002, 206 pp., £12.95, p/b.

The second edition of a book first published in 2002, with a foreword by Thomas Berry. If the first edition was sobering, the second is more so, since human development has continued to degrade and destroy the natural resources on which we depend. Moreover, the fundamental drivers of destruction are still intact. However, there is a power in the human spirit to shape the future and alter our course. The book summarises the symptoms of our situation involving ecological overshoot, overconsumption, deteriorating capacity to support life and, ironically, decreasing human well-being. In addition to our inadequate responses, our government systems are based on the false premise that we are separate from the Earth and can flourish even when the health of the Earth itself is deteriorating. The Great Work of Thomas Berry is to establish a benign or mutually enhancing human presence on the planet, and in this respect law and jurisprudence have an important role to play. Traditional societies have a much clearer sense of the universal Way, Dharma or Tao that underlies human formulation of laws. What Cullinan proposes is The Great Jurisprudence and extensions expressed in a viable Earth jurisprudence. Interestingly, this is actually beginning to happen with the adoption in 2008 of a constitution in Ecuador that recognises the rights of nature. Then, more recently, we have the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, which is printed as an appendix. This is a powerful statement that needs to reach the highest levels of law and politics.

Drought - Past Problems and Future Scenarios

by **Justin Sheffield & Eric F Wood**

Earthscan Ltd 2011, 210 pp., £49.99, h/b.

This must be the definitive book on drought. Down the ages it has caused immense social, economic and ecological damage. The book begins with definitions of drought, then an analysis of global hydrological cycles and the causes of

drought. It introduces ways of monitoring and modelling drought before embarking on a wide-ranging historical survey of the Holocene era, covering in more detail the last 2000 years - all this conveys a staggering amount of information. There is a separate chapter on drought in the 20th century and a geographical analysis of major drought events of the last hundred years. Perhaps the most important chapter is the prospect for intensified droughts during the 21st century in view of global climate change. This is particularly important in terms of water availability for agriculture, along with the declining quality of water. There is likely to be considerable competition for water resources, and this will become a strategic foreign policy issue. The authors point out that water is the principal medium through which climate change will affect economic, social and environmental conditions, including sea level rise, glacier melt, more floods and droughts. They think that the impacts are likely to become more severe, which means that coping mechanisms will have to evolve accordingly. More thorough research and better preparation can also play a significant role.

Climate, Soul of the Earth

by **Dennis Klocek**

Lindisfarne Books 2011, 277 pp., £22.50, p/b.

This book is a combination of deep philosophy with a highly competent survey of various aspects of the Earth's climate patterns, including El Niño and the occurrence of drought, floods and hurricanes. The understanding is built on a musical analogy played out over time but involving stochastic systems as well as planetary rhythms and their effect on human beings. There is a fascinating story about the timing of a heart operation and the need to be vigilant in the lunar cycle immediately following procedure. Interestingly, the arterial fibrillation pattern recurred on the 29th day. We know very little about such rhythms. The central thrust of the book is that the climate crisis is shared between humanity and the Earth as part of the process of mutual evolution towards a higher state of consciousness. There is also a moral dimension to the climate crisis, as Al Gore has observed. The key is to move towards a more harmonious interaction between humanity and the Earth.

Nature's Beauty

by **Armands Pundurs (SMN)**

Armands Pundurs 2010, 133 pp., h/b.

A beautifully produced book of contemplative photographs and free verses organised through the seasons, beginning with summer and ending with spring. The author has many photographs of his native Latvia, but also Bulgaria, Namibia, Japan and Nepal. There are many photos of flowers and grandiose landscapes - a particularly striking one of Everest Valley with autumn colours in the foreground. The book invites the reader to a quiet state of mind and a sense of spaciousness which we all need.

EDUCATION

Healthy Eating and Pollution Protection For Kids

by **David Reavely**

O Books 2011, 198 pp., £12.99, p/b.

We know a good deal about healthy eating in our household, as my wife Jane teaches healthy cooking and healthy living and is always trying to get George to eat proper food! This is

the kind book that she herself might have written as a survey including the perils of the Western diet, the nature of healthy diets, avoiding sugar and salt and differentiating between different forms of fats. There is a chapter on allergic kids, another on organic food and suggestions for healthy meals and ways of protecting kids from pollution. No parent can be indifferent to the importance of minimising junk food intake, not only for health reasons, but also for mental development. A very useful and practical guide.

DEATH AND DYING

The Afterlife Unveiled

by Stafford Betty

O Books 2011, 128 pp., £9.99, p/b.

An unusual and informative book by a professor of religion, exploring pictures of the afterlife from many different classic as well as less well-known sources of information. Very few professors of religion would venture onto this territory, which makes the book all the more refreshing. He points out that Christians are starved for clarity about the afterlife, and seeks to fill the gap and provide a map. He finds a strong case for the authenticity of the best channelled literature, which would correspond to my own conclusion. One

important idea is that revelation is progressive, and does not begin and end with the Scriptures. Direct quotations from the literature are in bold with an intervening commentary. There is a particularly interesting chapter of communications from an American judge, David Hatch, which is suitably clear and detailed. The author himself sums up his conclusions in a series of 44 reflections and paints a picture of continuous evolution.

The Shadows Lifted from Death

by A H Burbidge

Roundtable Publishing 2010, 248 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This is in addition to the considerable spiritualist literature on the nature of the afterlife and was channelled some 50 years ago. The subject is a man who died from a tropical disease in his early 30s, and he describes his life and development on the other side. The book shares many features with similar literature comparable to Stafford Betty's book reviewed in this section. Considerable attention is paid to the life review, the timely reminder that we are responsible for our actions and omissions. The overall picture is one of progressive evolution and service, remembering that what we do for others is perhaps the most important aspect of our lives. In a broad sense, we create our reality not only here but also in the hereafter.

From John Kapp – johnkapp@btinternet.com

Storming The Bastille

Calling for the integration of complementary therapy into the NHS under the NHS reforms

Many readers of this *Network Review* are complementary therapists, clients, or sympathetic towards it. Polls show that 3 out of 4 patients want complementary therapy free on the NHS, and 1 out of 2 GPs suggest that their patients try it, to cure their conditions and prevent worse sicknesses. The health reforms currently going through parliament should be supported because they allow for the public sector market to be opened up by GP commissioning consortia to Any Willing Qualified Provider of NICE-recommended treatment, which includes the following complementary therapies:

- For depression under Clinical Guidance CG23 (Dec 2004), and 123 (May 2011) the 8 week Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) course, which teaches meditation.
- For low back pain under CG88 (May 09) spinal manipulation by chiropractic, osteopathy, and acupuncture.

Depression and low back pain constitute two thirds of GP's case load. The NHS constitution became statute law in Jan 2010, and gives patients the statutory right to NICE-recommended treatments if their doctor says it is clinically appropriate. These complementary therapies are provided free on the NHS so that commissioners (PCTs) can tick the box: 'complies with NICE guide lines.' However the present amount commissioned is so small that the waiting time is *thousands of years*.

The Secretary of State for Health (Andrew Lansley) has made clear that future commissioning will be bottom up (not top down) via GPs, in a patient-led (not provider-led) NHS. Accordingly, anyone suffering from depression or low back pain can go to their GP and ask for the above complementary treatment to be provided free on the NHS. If he refuses, they can take him to judicial review without a legal leg to stand on. This gives opportunity to complementary therapists to set up as Any Willing Qualified Providers of these treatments and contract with their GP consortia commissioners.

In this way, the power of the people can inspire the paradigm shift to holism for which the SMN has always stood. The Swiss government has let the way in the world, with the integration of 5 complementary treatments into their NHS from 2012, following a referendum in which 2/3 voted in favour. The 5 treatments are called holistic medicine, herbalism, homeopathy, and 2 others which I did not recognise as they had suffered in translation.

I have suggested the creation of a **complementary therapy section** (a special interest group) to promote the integration of complementary therapy into the NHS. I am willing to be its secretary, and suggest that it starts as a web-based forum.

To give an idea of the scope of this new section, please consider website www.sectco.org. This is about the Social Enterprise Complementary Therapy Company (SECTCo) which I founded to provide these treatments free on the NHS in Brighton and Hove, in exchange for vouchers prescribed by GPs. Please contact me at 22, Saxon Rd, Hove BN3 4LE, or johnkapp@btinternet.com, or phone 01273 417997.