



books in brief

David Lorimer

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

SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Artificial Intelligence

Jerry Kaplan

Oxford 2016, 165 pp., \$16.95, p/b.

This book is part of a new series entitled what everyone needs to know. It is an excellent overview informed by the author's own viewpoint while setting out the issues in an impartial fashion. The format means that each chapter is divided into questions that form its subsections. They are just the kind of questions that an intelligent enquirer would ask. He covers definitions, the history and philosophy of the field, law, then the impacts of artificial intelligence on human labour and social equity, ending with a discussion of possible future impacts. Kaplan is sceptical of the wilder claims of AI advocates, but does point out that there are many functions that are better and more rapidly performed by machines. Interestingly, his own view on the will and consciousness leads him (on the basis that brain produces consciousness) to the conclusion that either people and computers can free will or neither can – although he does not think that the notion of consciousness can be applied to machines. The chapter on the impact of artificial intelligence on human labour is a fascinating one, citing a study from the Oxford Martin School from 2013 concluding that 47% of today's jobs are at high risk of automation, and another 19% at medium risk. One hyped concern is the possibility of runaway super intelligence, which the author regards as pretty remote and speculative. However, he does recommend the establishment of professional and ethical standards for the development and testing of intelligent systems. In addition, the employment trends require urgent attention in view of the large numbers of young people – especially the unskilled – unable to find work. This may require a wholesale redesign of our economic systems.

The Singularity

Edited by Uziel Awret

Imprint Academic 2016, 426 pp., £29.95, p/b.

This hugely informative volume on the Singularity - the idea that artificial intelligence can and will outstrip human intelligence - considers this possibility and its implications very seriously. The structure is based on a brilliant keynote essay by the philosopher David Chalmers, with interdisciplinary commentaries from authoritative figures in philosophy, physics, futurism, AI research, neuroscience and ethics. It begins with a sceptical essay by the journalist Bryan Appleyard then a very thorough and considered introduction by the editor. Among the nearly 30 distinguished contributors are Daniel Dennett, Susan Greenfield, Frank Tipler, Ray Kurzweil, and the book is endorsed by Lord Rees. The Chalmers essay is a model of clear exposition, laying out the issues in a systematic way. One key general assumption, supported by many in the field including John Searle, is that the brain is a biological machine and

therefore susceptible to artificial emulation when uploaded into a different format. Among others, Susan Greenfield challenges this assumption, maintaining that neurons are dynamic rather than mechanistic and discussing more sophisticated types of intelligence, understanding and even wisdom. One idea I found strange in Chalmers (p. 48) is that just because we have no idea how a nonbiological system could be conscious and we have equally no idea how a biological system could be conscious, then we should assume that both biological and nonbiological systems can be conscious. The volume raises profound questions about the nature of identity, especially in the light of how one might upload the brain into an artificial vehicle. Daniel Dennett reflects that we already controlled by the Internet, while Ray Kurzweil observes that our intelligent devices have already become part of who we are and we are gradually becoming a hybrid of biological and nonbiological intelligence (p. 312). For those who seriously want to engage with the philosophical issues raised by the Singularity, this volume is essential reading.

Marconi

Marc Raboy

Oxford 2016, 841 pp., £25, h/b.

Subtitled 'the man who networked the world', this is the first really major biography of Marconi, and it is an extraordinary achievement. Marconi emerges as a multifaceted individual - inventor, entrepreneur, statesman and diplomat. He had a special sense of himself and his capacity from an early age, sensing that he would one day do something new and great. He did not shine at school, but in his late teens, having read about Hertz's experiments, he became fascinated with the idea that electromagnetic waves could be used as a medium of communication, and conducted his own first successful experiments in the summer of 1895 at the age of 21.

Readers of this Review will be interested in the exchange with Sir Oliver Lodge, another pioneer in the field and a detractor as well as competitor of Marconi. His work was of interest to the Society of Psychical Research as mental radio was a common metaphor at the time. In 1898, Sir William Crookes was president of the Society as well as of the British Association – he recognised the significance of telegraphy and telepathy. Regardless of the controversy surrounding the invention of wireless, the author observes that Marconi was undoubtedly the man who put it into practice - hence the subtitle - the founder of the field that led to mobile telephony, Wi-Fi, social media and cloud computing. It was he who mobilised commercial and political forces and used wireless technology to change the world. The author comments that this makes him more like Edison or Franklin than Galileo or Einstein. All this brought Marconi numerous honours and a Nobel Prize in physics in 1909 at the age of 35. We are left with the reflection that technology promotes on the one hand contact and openness, but it can equally become an instrument for domination, manipulation and control. It is fitting that when he died, radio stations all over the world went silent in his honour.

Void – The Strange Physics of Nothing**James Owen Weatherall***Templeton Press 2016, 196 pp., \$26, h/b.*

This engaging account shows nothing is in fact something and that nothing really matters; as one reviewer put it, empty space is full and absence has structure. This is all about the physics of not stuff rather than stuff, and relates the history of the physics of nothing from the 17th-century through to Maxwell, Einstein, the quantum vacuum and string theory. It shows how basic concepts have to be completely rethought as physics advances, but also gives an insight into the characters involved and their relationships, for instance Newton and Leibniz, Einstein and his professors, and the temperament of Dirac.

Redesigning Life**John Parrington***Oxford 2016, 352 pp., £22.99, h/b.*

As the title might suggest, this book covers some of the latest technological developments in the life sciences with a particular emphasis on genome editing, optogenetics, stem cell technology and synthetic biology. As the author observes, there has been a long-standing tension between 'those who believe we should merely seek to understand the natural world and those who think we should actively manipulate and control it for human benefit. (p. 31) This is what Schumacher called the science of understanding and the science of manipulation. Most life scientists and technologists are in the latter camp, while those favouring harmony with nature are likely to be in the former. As with technological developments related to the singularity discussed above, this is a situation that provides us with unprecedented powers to manipulate the natural world while posing crucial questions about how these powers are to be used in a responsible fashion (p. 229). At one extreme, they could be used with evil intent to harm, while at the other they promise significant agricultural or medical benefits. Even the benefits argument is open to abuse in cases where researchers exaggerate these in order to provide an argument for further funding.

This highly informative book brings the reader right up-to-date with cutting-edge advances, literally in the case of genome editing - for instance CRISPR/CAS9 where an enzyme is used to cut the DNA and paste other DNA code into the genome. This is said to be more precise and efficient than earlier genetic engineering techniques. However, it is an extension of the same metaphors with refinements such as 'molecular scalpel'. After discussing the various technologies in more detail, the author looks at a number of scenarios in his final chapter (following regenerating life and life as a machine) on the prospects for a redesigned planet based on our historic capacity to make and use tools guided by our self-conscious awareness. The author sees our greatest challenge as global warming and offers the interesting prospect of modifying methane production in cows so as to reduce their contribution to this process. These developments are proceeding at such a pace that it is difficult for the public to keep up and still more so to ensure an unpolarised discussion especially with respect to modifying human brains or embryos. It is here that philosophers specialising in practical ethics have an important role to play.

Biocode**Dawn Field and Neil Davies***Oxford 2016, 196 pp., £9.99, p/b.*

This book gives an overview of the broader impacts of genomics on our understanding of life and an account of the major international projects underway since the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003. A major implication is the realisation that we are all ecosystems and should begin to think accordingly. An obvious example is the human microbiome - the huge variety of gut flora. Some potential modifications suggest that we have the capacity to evolve into a new and hybrid species that Itskov calls *homo evolutis*

and conjuring up life extension and genomic immortality as an upload. However, none of this is unpacked in the way it is in *The Singularity* reviewed above; indeed, the tone is more descriptive than critical. The authors do sound a note of caution where the Earth as a whole is concerned - we are terra-genoming at an increasing pace without a full understanding of the implications of our actions. With respect to the Planetary Genome Project, we would do well to bring in a better understanding of complexity and systems to the more reductionist biological way of thinking, and I found it surprising that the word epigenetic did not appear in the index.

MEDICINE-HEALTH**The Chemistry of Connection****Patrick Holford***Hay House 2016, 275 pp., £12.99, p/b.*

Patrick Holford has become well-known for his pioneering work on health and nutrition over the last 30 years. He invites readers to take the journey from disconnection to connection and draws freely on a wide range of experiences and initiations on his own path. He distinguishes five main forms of connection: sexual, sensual and erotic; body and earth; social and self; intellectual and spiritual, all leading to the ultimate experience of living in a state of connection. In his introduction, he shows how, despite our technology, we are in fact very disconnected and many of us are living in a state of high alert and stress. He is very critical of the materialistic assumptions of atheistic scientism (AS), bringing forward evidence that such an approach is quite inadequate, not only philosophically, but also ethically. The same applies to medicine, dominated as it is by pharmaceutical interests. He rightly argues that we need a system upgrade, a 'radical reframing based on true science and experience, not belief.'

The four parts discuss conscious connection, the form of connection, heart connection and the ultimate connection. His chapter on entheogens is highly instructive, and he shows from a theoretical standpoint and from his own experience how these sacred plants remove our normal perceptual filters and argues for a radical revision of social attitudes to these substances, also, incidentally, backed by Sir Richard Branson in a recent article in the RSA journal. He reports on some research based on the hundred people who scored highest in his 100% health questionnaire that 47% had had a peak experience or profound experience of unity, while 57% believed in God or a higher power or consciousness, no doubt partly because of their own experience. As a culture, we have cut ourselves off from this higher power, the ultimate disconnection (deep love is the ultimate form of connection, which Patrick experienced on a Zen retreat).

The positive state of our mind-body connection is another critical variable in the new systems-based medicine. He gives guidance about how to increase vital energy through special forms of breathing, and also for 'earthing' using a copper plate connected to the Earth, partly as a way of protecting us from harmful electromagnetic fields. Sacred geometry also plays an important role, and here Patrick draws on the work of his friend Malcolm Stewart - he could also have referred to Keith Critchlow. He gives an overview of exercises for opening the heart and increasing coherence, also highlighting Rupert Sheldrake's work on morphic fields and telepathic connections. His discussion of the interplay between the masculine and feminine principles leads to a chapter on the alchemy of sex and spirit as a way of channelling and refining life energy or the energy of desire. Interestingly, the word tantra derives from a root meaning stretch or expand. There is a very useful summary at the end, showing how an understanding of various forms of connection can also lead to corresponding actions to bring about a more connected world.

The Heart Field

Dr Christine Bair – www.heartcenteredwellness.com

Self-published 2016, 191 pp., no price given, p/b.

The author of this helpful book has a background in many disciplines, including nursing, philosophy and religious studies, counselling psychology and spiritual direction, which she brought together in a doctorate at Holos University. She says more about her background later in the book, but I would have found it useful at the beginning as a personal context for what follows. What she calls the Heart Field is an energetic phenomenon best understood as part of the new multi-dimensional vibrational medicine as well as an experience of unity. As such, love, coherence, harmony and balance are central. We are essentially spiritual beings functioning as interconnected and interdependent, and our path is one of expansion from the separate ego to the more embracing perspective of the heart, thus integrating a new science with ancient spirituality. Christine clearly explains the nature of the heart field and how to access it in various respects, including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual factors. For her, feelings represent our perception of our own state of energy integrity, and are messengers from the soul, so we need to understand their vibrational function. She quotes Edgar Mitchell as saying that resonance is nature's way of transferring information, and explains her principle of heart centred wellness with accompanying practices. So the key lies not only in the reading but also in dedication to practice as the only possible means of transformation. We not only need mindfulness, but also heartfulness, the integration of masculine and feminine principle.

Prevent and Cure Diabetes

Dr Sarah Myhill and Craig Robinson

Hammersmith Books 2016, 267 pp., £14.99, p/b.

I reviewed Sarah's excellent book on sustainable medicine in the last issue – this one makes the same general points but is applied particularly to diabetes. Her starting point is that the vast majority of Westerners have what she calls metabolic syndrome or carbohydrate addiction that is driving not only diabetes but also other conditions such as heart disease, Alzheimer's and cancer. Technically, this means that the body is primarily energised with sugars and carbohydrates, leading to a loss of control over blood sugar levels. Conventional treatments, she maintains, simply allow the disease to progress leading to greater use of prescription drugs and premature death. As a practitioner, it is clear that she has been able to reverse this process many of her patients, saving the NHS a fortune in the process. She reminds us of the work of Otto Warburg, the 1931 Nobel prize winner for physiology, whose work suggested that cancer is a metabolic disease hungry for sugar. Sugar also encourages inflammation and fermentation in the system.

The book sets out a detailed description of diagnosis, and in particular the role of sugar and refined carbohydrates, before moving on to prevention, treatment and reversal of metabolic syndrome. Sarah describes how she persuades people to change, partly through fear and vanity, but also applied common sense in altering lifestyle, which is largely a matter of habit. There are then 12 appendices dealing with further detail and a table on page 97 advising on a daily routine based on a ketogenic diet where the body is fuelled from fats and vegetable fibre. Combined with her previous book, this provides essential guidance on a sustainable healthy lifestyle.

The Answer to Cancer – An Electron Deficit Condition

Keith Foster (SMN)

Sagax Publishing 2016, 140 pp., no price given – see www.keithfoster.co.uk

This clearly written book is consistent with much of the new thinking emerging around the genesis and prevention of cancer, putting forward the hypothesis that cancer is an electron deficit condition and not a disease. Like Dr Mercola, Keith supports the metabolic theory outlined by Dr Otto Warburg, who received

the Nobel Prize for physiology for his work showing that cancer results from too little oxygen getting into the cell and that it cannot thrive in an alkaline environment; modern diets, electromagnetic overload and stress tend to shift us into a susceptible acidic state. The book looks at a number of key elements including Vitamins C and E, hydration, negative ions, essential fatty acids, iodine, selenium, charcoal, turmeric, fasting and blood cleanse. Then there are appendices on slowing the ageing process and lengthening healthy lifespan.

Each scientifically-backed segment of explanation is followed by recommendations, for instance the amount and timing of water drinking, the importance of raw food and the role of fasting. Keith summarises his conclusions and guidance on p. 74 and lists his daily dosages on p. 82 – this is followed by a comprehensive chart of pH foods. Another interesting point is the similarity between fungal and cancer cells, which means that cancer may also respond to some fungal treatments. A further section deals with earthing and the importance of walking with bare feet on the earth, which means that the human body 'forms a coupled oscillator that is in harmonic resonance with the earth.' All in all, this practical book conveys much more than its title – it is a handbook for optimum health.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Dr Megan Arroll and Professor Christine Dancey

Hammersmith Books 2016, 187 pp., £14.99, p/b.

This excellent book is based on the experience of the authors, both as patients and as health specialists. It provides a way of navigating towards recovery, with sections on living and managing life, diagnosis, medical treatments, nutritional treatments, psychological and behavioural approaches, self-help strategies and some guidance for friends and family. It also situates the issue within current directions for research. It is evident that the authors are uniquely qualified in this area, which they characterise as a biopsychosocial disorder, making it harder to treat in individual cases. A highly instructive and helpful guide.

What's Up with your Gut?

Jo Waters and Professor Julian Walters

Hammersmith 2016, 244 pp., £11.95, p/b.

This is a very useful handbook for anyone suffering from a variety of gut-related disorders such as bloating, IBS (as above) and gluten sensitivity. The authors combine specialist knowledge with journalistic expertise. The figures speak for themselves: up to one in five GP consultations is for gut symptoms while 41% of patients never visit their doctor to discuss digestive complaints. In 2014 some 18 million laxative products were prescribed in GP practices for constipation, which accounted for a staggering 666,287 hospital admissions in the same year. Many factors may be responsible for this situation, including drug side effects, changes in diet and correspondingly in gut flora. And as 80% of our immune system is in the gut, sorting out our digestive problems is essential for good health. The book's symptom-led approach makes it very useful as a user's guide.

To obtain your copy of
**“The Answer
 to Cancer”**
 by Keith Foster, FLS

+44 1600 229057 (UK)
answertocancer.co.uk
 (available at Amazon books)

What is Hypnosis?**Tom Fortes Mayer***Watkins 2016, 140 pp., £7.99, h/b.*

Another very useful book in the *What Is* series, based on answering a series of key questions: what is the essence of hypnosis? How does it really work? What are its main purposes? Can it change your life? How it can become part of your daily life, and potentially make the world a better place? The format means that these chapters answers a further series of questions, with practical exercises included. Many people now use hypnosis not only for therapeutic purposes but also to enhance performance, for instance in golf. The way in which we might use it will depend on the reader, but there is no doubt that 'hypnosis is the one way of getting the unconscious and conscious minds working in harmony', enabling us to bring about change at a subconscious level. Too frequently, we can be held back by these unconscious patterns.

Public Health**Virginia Berridge***Oxford 2016, 138 pp., £7.99, p/b.*

The author of this concise and informative book is director of the Centre for History in Public Health in the University of London. As such, she has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of developments in public health as well as of current trends. The book begins by defining public health, drawing on some recent reports, and provides some useful diagrams illustrating the various aspects ranging from culture, environment and individual lifestyle factors to social and community issues including inequality. Economic advances have brought up new issues such as obesity and implications of increased mobility while the profile of other issues such as tobacco and alcohol as well as sugar is changing depending on location. There is a fascinating chapter on the history of public health from the Greeks and Romans onwards and describing the devastation of the Black Death. The 1800s saw considerable progress in sanitation and the development of the germ theory of disease. In the 20th century, the focus in the West was the rise of lifestyle factors and epidemiological transition towards the so-called diseases of civilisation. After a chapter on tropical and international public health, the author returns to current issues, which include and ageing population and the role of self-diagnosis on the Internet. For anyone looking for a concise overview of the field, this book cannot be bettered.

Esoteric Physiology – Consciousness and Disease**Dennis Klocek***Lindisfarne Books 2016, 231 pp., \$25, p/b.*

The author has been director of the consciousness studies programme at the Rudolf Steiner College in Sacramento since 1992. As such, his knowledge of Steiner's work is encyclopaedic, and forms the background for these lectures. Oddly, the book contains no introduction, but plunges straight in at chapter 1. Given the esoteric nature of the material covered, this is an omission except for readers already familiar with this approach, which includes visualisation as well as analysis. It also relates physical with subtler forms of anatomy, as the lectures move around the body considering embryology, nutrition, various organs, digestion, imagination, emotions and the will. In a chapter on nerve and blood, there is a very powerful formula for the removal of curses, as a representation of Soul Force in terms of thinking, feeling and willing:

*By the power of the Living Christ all curses,
Whether ancient, hidden or repeated,
Are found, bound and defeated
And must leave me now
To be revealed by the light
To be absolved by the truth
To be returned to the Source of all things
From this time forward, right now, for ever.
So be it, It is so, Let it be done.
Thank You.*

Interestingly, the author likens this mantra to a Bach fugue, and while he was studying it spent a lot of time listening to The Art of Fugue. The whole book involves a lot of inner work and I liked his remark that we should never waste a good obstacle in life. Is another book put it, what is in the way is the way.

PHILOSOPHY-SPIRITUALITY**Religion in a Secular Society – Fifty Years On****Bryan Wilson (edited by Steve Bruce)***Oxford 2016, 258 pp., £27.50, h/b.*

It is very interesting to reflect on developments since the publication of this seminal book in 1966. Bryan Wilson (1926-2004) was born into a working-class family, left school at 13 but subsequently graduated in economics from the University of London and became Reader in Sociology and a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford in 1963. He was President of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion. This new edition is introduced by Steve Bruce, and provides an opportunity to consider the secularisation thesis and its development over the last 50 years. Starting from the historical situation that religious thinking, practices and institutions were once the very centre of the life of Western society, this situation has now radically changed, due in Wilson's view largely to increasing social diversity and individual liberty. Liberalism in turn encouraged tolerance, leading to more questioning of traditional thinking in theology, philosophy and science.

The book falls into four parts: the pattern of secularisation in England and elsewhere in Europe, its contrasting pattern in America, the religious response, and finally the sectarian and denominational alternative. Like many, Wilson was concerned about the loss of a common underpinning of morality and its privatisation and relativisation, an issue also addressed by Albert Schweitzer in his formulation of an ethic of reverence for life. The first appendix discusses criticisms of the secularisation thesis in historical, empirical and theoretical terms. The second appendix is particularly interesting in looking at the continuation of trends discussed by Wilson. One instance is the decline of baptism of England's infants by the Church of England from 55% in 1962 to 13% in 2008, and corresponding decline in weddings from 70% to around 30%. Church attendance has continued to decline, while the figures for alternative spirituality are still relatively low, although 15% of a 2013 poll said they were spiritual, with 8% religious and 10% saying they were both – this leaves 48% saying they were neither. The ordination of women had a dramatic effect between 1982 and 2010, with figures increasing from 5% to 21% in the Church of England, and even more dramatically in Methodism. Wilson did not anticipate the rise of the charismatic movement and the controversial issues arising from Muslim presence, especially since the turn-of-the-century. Bruce devotes considerable space to developments in the US, noting that the percentage of population disclaiming any religious affiliation rose from 16.1% to 22.8% between 2007 and 2014. Observing that academics frequently build their reputations by opposing the positions of their predecessors, he concludes that Wilson's secularisation model is still a pretty robust analysis.

Forty Years of Science and Religion**Edited by Neil Spurway and Louise Hickman***Cambridge Scholars 2016, 225 pp., £34.99, p/b.*

This volume emerged from the 40th anniversary conference of the Science and Religion Forum last year. It was founded by Rev Dr Arthur Peacocke in 1975 - he went on to win the Templeton Prize for his work. It takes the opportunity of looking backwards and forwards in the field, which is adjacent but not identical to that of the Network. It focuses more on the relationship between Christian theology and science, while we are focused on relationships between science and spirituality,

science and mysticism and science and consciousness. The first two parts are formal papers from the conference, and cover a wide range of themes. Alister McGrath, the current holder of the chair at Oxford for science and religion, provides a useful insight into multiple perspectives, levels and narratives as different ways of understanding the relationship. He also writes very clearly about scientism, a common concern and philosophical blinder for those who are unaware of it. The influence of Ian Barbour is evident in many papers.

Two that I found particularly interesting were, first, Fraser Watts' reflections on the Epiphany Philosophers, which also include Rupert Sheldrake and Chris Clarke as well as the Whitehead philosopher Dorothy Emmet (1904-2000), who took part in a couple of our seminars in the 1990s. Unusually, their focus was on the contemplative aspect of Christianity and, unlike many groups, they were open to parapsychology as well as forging radical ideas in biology and physics. The report of a survey of secondary school students about what teenagers believe about the soul was very intriguing as one could see how their thinking was shaped by their own experience as well as considerations from science and philosophy. Some of them were aware of the limitations of a scientific perspective confined to the physical. Another stimulating reflection came from Michael Fuller, questioning the thesis by Peter Harrison that advocates of constructive dialogue between science and religion are unknowingly complicit in the perpetuation of conflict. Overall, the book provides very good overview of the state of play in relationships between science and religion.

The Soul of the World

Sir Roger Scruton

Princeton University Press 2014, 205 pp., £13.95, p/b.

This beautifully written book, based on the Stanton Lectures delivered in Cambridge, asks what is left of our spiritual and aesthetic aspirations in the light of scientific naturalism. The author defends the reality of the sacred and the transcendent that cannot be understood through the lens of science. In this respect, he puts forward what he calls a cognitive dualism where we as humans live in two worlds: the naturalistic world of science (*Welt*) and the inner *Lebenswelt*, which allows us access to an interpersonal form of reality that is irreducible. For Scruton, religion is not simply about ritual and doctrine, but rather a sense of real and lived presence. This is also the area of the covenant as opposed to the functional and impersonal contract.

Drawing easily on a wide range of sources, he argues that 'the overreaching intentionality of interpersonal responses presents us with meanings that transcend the domain of any natural science.' His argument is at its most poignant when he discusses our experience of music. Music takes place in the space, with its own intentionality and language, which illustrates from Beethoven, Bach and Rachmaninov. Given the subtlety of his mind, I was surprised to read his assertion that we have no evidence of survival of consciousness beyond death (p. 186). Here, he could have applied his own cognitive dualism by admitting on the one hand that death is the dissolution of the physical body, while on the other that some form of inner life might continue; even so, he does hint at such a possibility that in surrendering the gift of life, we may find ourselves in transition 'to the place whence we emerged' and might hope to be welcomed there.

Philosophers Take on the World

Edited by David Edmonds

Oxford 2016, 250 pp., £12.99, h/b.

This stimulating volume is a selection from The Practical Ethics Blog (www.blog.practicaethics.ox.ac.uk) consisting of over 60 contributions on a wide variety of issues such as crime and punishment, terrorism, guns and war, health and medicine, sexuality, sport, language, moral emotions, animals and the future. They are reflections on news items, and are therefore intrinsically related to events rather than being constructed moral dilemmas using scenarios to test moral and ethical development. The authors probe issues of logic and consistency, stimulating readers to think more deeply about the matters in hand. One example is neuroscience and responsibility, with two entries about whether the brain is to blame for decisions. This is a slippery slope, already present in the law courts. Peter Singer discusses countering Islamic extremism with an appeal to reason, recognising that some people may not be swayed by such arguments. Another essay takes as its point of departure a recent Australian study on homeopathy showing that all its putative effects can be explained as nothing more than placebo - a conclusion still hotly debated - but leading to the inference that the cheapest remedy should be used as cost is the most important factor if none of them works.

The Spirit of Spinoza

Neal Grossman – foreword by Huston Smith

ICRL Press, 2014, 274 pp., \$17.25, p/b.

Many readers will have heard of Spinoza (1632-1677) while knowing little about his work, perhaps from the chapter of Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*. This book, subtitled 'Healing the Mind' is both an introduction to his thought and a practical application of it, considering that the essence of his work was an emendation of the understanding so that we could reach 'supreme and continuous happiness' by means of union with the Mind of God. There are five chapters: metaphysics, the mind, desire and emotion, freedom from bondage, and transcendence, along with 32 exercises that enable readers to gain a first-hand understanding of the process involved, especially in relation to the emotions. One of Spinoza's arguments is for a determinism in terms of our desires, since our choice reflects the strongest desire. Although this is true, the argument is circular as you are always working backwards from what actually happened. Having said this, there is an excellent analysis of the kinds of social programming and conditioning that fundamentally influence the choices we make and the beliefs we hold. Becoming aware of these is freedom from bondage - and one Western example is the priority we give to analysis over appreciation, and also to competition over cooperation. The culmination is union with God and spiritual love of God, feeling and knowing that we are eternal and hence overcoming the longing embedded in the personality as separation from the source. This is what Spinoza call is knowledge of the third kind or blessedness, a message also found in the contemporary books reviewed below.

You are THIS

J.M. Harrison

Mantra Books (John Hunt) 2016, 175 pp., £10.99, p/b.

The interest in non-duality and universal spirituality is a striking feature of our time, and certainly more prevalent than 30 years ago. The message of this book and the next one is very similar in terms of recognising the universal self within (the subtitle is 'awakening to the living presence of your soul'), immediately, in the present, without thought. Indeed, thought gets in the way of being aware of THIS. Reading about it, however, is paradoxical as it is not an experience of THIS! It reminds me of the old story that many people prefer lectures on heaven to heaven. In the course of the book, the author coins a number of useful new terms: the 'me-go' is individual human consciousness that denies our essential Oneness, a part without awareness of the Whole. Then 'One-duality' as the

next stage of evolution towards the 'Unividual', one who lives the non-dual in the duality of the world, while ever conscious that all is one. An important part of the process, explained in part two, is the deconstruction of psychological patterns, and one comes to appreciate that the truth can only be articulated paradoxically, which the author expresses towards the end. Thus, 'only through Oneness can the unique persona of the Soul be expressed.... All opposites are complementary partial truths and simultaneously true... Souls are unique patterns of a singular Consciousness.... Fear arises in consciousness when love is forgotten.... Consciousness appears random, yet it is the Sole Cosmic Constant... Fulfilment follows surrender.... Non-duality is Awareness experiencing itself, which is duality.' Each of these finely chiselled statements is like a hologram containing all the others. A perceptive and penetrating account of spiritual unfolding.

The Morning Muse

Octavia Williams (www.centerforlivingtruth.com)

O Books 2016, 254 pp., £13.99, p/b.

This inspiring work contains 250 statements of Truth revealed through meditation and helping the reader awaken from the illusion of separation from one's true Self- realising one's True Nature or True Identity through direct experience. We need this conscious awareness of Truth through our own experience of Oneness in order to transcend the mental constructs that are limiting us. As the author suggests, we don't just need words, but enlightened understanding. The contents serve as a reminder that there is only One Consciousness, One Mind, which is also us in the very present moment. The extract below reminds one of Meister Eckhart, the same message but over 700 years ago:

*Rest in the awareness of I AM
abide there, live there, breathe there –
know that you're not really breathing,
Spirit is breathing you.
You're not walking,
God is walking as you.*

The book can be opened at random, as there are only a few words on each page. Here is another nice insight: 'tolerance is easy when you realise there is only One Self.' Then 'we won't see the Reality of a person, place, thing, condition or situation unless and until we see its Beauty.' There are many beautiful gems like this, which can serve as starting points for deeper awareness of who we really are. A powerful source of true inspiration.

Deep Awake

Tim Freke – www.timfreke.com

Watkins 2016, 204 pp., £9.99, p/b.

This wise and balanced book draws on many years of reading and reflection about the nature of the human journey, and is subtitled 'wake up to oneness and celebrate your individuality.' To be deep awake is to be conscious of the underlying oneness, but also of separation, of depth and surface, knowing and not knowing. This is what Tim calls the paralogical structure of both-and, so he rejects the one-sidedness of choosing only an aspect of reality, seeing the ego as a hero rather than an obstacle, as expressed in many spiritual traditions. This is both liberating and refreshing since it celebrates life in all its richness, inviting the reader to engage as a lover of life: awakening requires individuality.

He criticises the depersonalisation implied in many teachings on non-duality: he thinks they are correct in saying that all is one and everything is just happening, but on the other hand everything is separate and we all exist as individuals who can choose. We are both an irrelevant speck and the star of the show; life is to be enjoyed, but at times also endured, depending on the circumstances. Tim encourages readers to accept that our experience of life is both good and bad, since existence is predicated on paradoxicality - we can't have the yum

without the yuk. This means that while life may be bad, it is always good - we can always seek out the good that is also present. Finally, when we are deep awake, 'it is obvious that love is what really matters in life.'

The Seer

Lars Muhl (www.larsmuhl.com)

Watkins 2016, 151 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This book is the first volume of *The O Manuscript*, a quite extraordinary work - partly set at Montsegur - that I reviewed in the summer of 2015, and is now published separately. While I would recommend reading the entire work, this first book is a revelation and initiation in itself, not only to the author, but also for the reader. The Seer was a remarkable healer and sage who worked with people around the world, seeking to free them from their fears and help them enlarge the consciousness to become an expression of the universal. He himself made a journey from power to freedom after he had a realisation of universal connectedness. This gives a totally new outlook on life and asks of us what we can do from universal perspective, opening up to the flow of life. There is also an extraordinary description of the life review in terms of going down the shaft of the soul and engaging in a process of refinement and integration. Essential reading for spiritual aspirants.

Philosophy for Living in Evolution

Edited by Vir Singh and Zlatica Plasienkova

Creative Fire Press 2016, 291 pp., no price given, p/b.

This volume emerged from a meeting in India on what Henryk Skolimowski calls lumenosophy and lumenarchy. Never content with the limitations of existing vocabulary, he has coined a number of important terms that expand our sense of possibilities. The first part discusses the light of philosophy and the philosophy of light, moving on to ecological integrity, ethics and sustainability, then a section on eco-poetry and finally the art of light - it is a pity that this last section is in black-and-white. The book conveys a radical tone, reminding the reader the basis of right politics must be wisdom, which Henryk calls sophocracy, corresponding to a more universal vision embodied in the idea of cosmocracy. A number of authors expound the philosophy of light, reminding us that light is consciousness and consciousness is light. Paul Hague provides important contribution with his essay on the coherent light of consciousness as an awakening to self reflective intelligence, itself a gateway to the divine. Is interesting to read some Indian reflections on sustainability, especially Prof Singh on agro-ecology in relation to food production. The poetry provides an inspiring vision in a more concentrated form, calling for the light of awakening - this section also enables Henryk to express his philosophy in a concentrated lyrical form, encouraging readers to have fire in their lives, to be indomitable, and to transmit as well as receive light as inherently divine beings.

On Time

Edited by Marina Marren

Cambridge Scholars 2016, 130 pp., £45.99, h/b

This volume brings together seven essays discussing aspects of time in the history of philosophy, going back to Plato, Plotinus and Augustine through to Spinoza, Kant, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Husserl, Levinas and Ricoeur. As such, the discussion is on a relatively technical level covering themes such as being and eternity, the time of the body, self and time, time and imagination, and internal time. One especially interesting theme is the relationship between time and the self. The editor points out that time is the ground of history and an enquiry into time also constitutes a questioning of the character of (and intentionality in) one's own existence, for instance in terms of anxiety and ultimately death. For Heidegger, the self is on the one hand time itself and yet not in time, corresponding to finite and infinite knowing. Our identity and memory through time is vital to the underlying notion of the self and the extent to which it persists beyond the death of the body.

Morning Homilies III

Pope Francis

Orbis Books, 2016, 191 pp., \$18, p/b.

Every morning, the Pope says Mass and gives a short homily for fellow residents and guests in the chapel of St Martha's Guesthouse, where he lives. This volume covers the period February to June 2014 and is reported in the third person with many direct quotations. The Pope is also referred to as the Holy Father and the Bishop of Rome. These are best read as they were delivered, as short reflections relating the Bible to the spirituality of everyday life. We all experience obstacles requiring patience and humility, and the challenge here is not to stand still, to become drifters and what he calls lifestyle tourists. He encourages readers to open both their hearts and minds. Above all, he encourages us to move beyond abstraction and moral casuistry, beyond expediency, and to avoid the zealotry of revolutionaries as well as the quietism of contemplatives. All in all, as one might expect, he conveys a great deal of spiritual good sense.

Secrets of the Lost Mode of Prayer

Gregg Braden

Hay House 2016 (2006), 153 pp., £8.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'the hidden power of beauty, blessing, wisdom and hurt', this book draws on the Navajo tradition with its emphasis on beauty as well as on pilgrimages into the monasteries of central Tibet. It postulates a higher power characterised as a force, field or presence in which 95% of the world's population believe. I was struck by the Tibetan Abbot's remark that 'feeling is the prayer', in other words the spirit in which it is made. This involves aligning human consciousness from the inside so that we do not so much pray for rain as pray rain. The practitioner builds up inner strength by overcoming corresponding challenges and transforms blocked energy. In this sense, blessing can be a release and we can move into a new state of gratitude where the universe can respond to what we become and feel.

Caves of Power

Sergio Magana Ocelocoyotl

Hay House 2016, 190 pp., £10.99, p/b.

This is Sergio's third book on the Toltec tradition of ancient Mexico. He is a healer and medicine man with detailed theoretical and practical knowledge of this tradition that has its own map and understanding of reality. It is essentially a practical guide where the caves of power refer to the hidden aspects of the inner self, the realm of dreams and underworlds. The book is focused on energy techniques directed towards healing, rejuvenation and manifestation, which also form its structure. He explains the Toltec understanding of the human energy system and numerology that underlie the practical techniques. Although these are described in detail, only a very dedicated reader is likely to pursue the exercises, which are probably best learned first-hand with expert guidance. There is also the question of speaking a foreign language when it comes to formulae. Interested readers can also consult www.sergiomagana.com

PSYCHOLOGY-CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

The Red Book of C.G. Jung

Walter Boechat

Karnac Books 2016, 138 pp., £19.99, p/b.

Jung's *Red Book (Liber Novus)* was published to great acclaim in 2009. Around that time, we published two articles by Roger Woolger on the book, as well as a review. The editor, Sonu Shamdasani, also gave a talk to the London group. Here, Walter Boechat reflects on what the book means in terms of the future of psychological theory and psychotherapy, especially as an example of Jung's own method of active imagination. He explains the gestation of the book, its structure, the various heroes depicted in it, the margin at the edge of creativity and madness, the legacy of the dead, and the search for the centre in the process of individuation. Like Hesse, Jung was greatly influenced by Gnosticism and was fascinated by the Janus figure of Abraxas, who also appears in Hesse's *Demian*. The *Red Book* itself contains many extraordinary mandalas as symbols of the centre, the midpoint between the ego and the unconscious. An important part of our journey is moving our centre from self to Self, represented for him by the figure of Philemon, who is depicted in the book. An important part of his search for wholeness was his activity at Bollingen, with its simple activities of chopping wood, carving, tending the fire and cooking. I think the author is right in highlighting the way in which the book and the time at which it was written express a radical cultural crisis in the West, which is still going on as we seek to achieve a planetary vision of wholeness with a corresponding ethic of interconnectedness.

Consciousness and the Source of Reality

Robert G. Jahn and Brenda J. Dunne

ICRL Press 2011, 380 pp., \$19.95, p/b.

Many readers will be familiar with the work of the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR) Unit. This was initiated in the late 1970s and ran for around 30 years. It constitutes the most important sequence of evidence on PK and (precognitive) remote perception, all of which is fully documented in this comprehensive book. It begins by considering the overall context of the research, including current ideas in biology, medicine and consciousness studies. It then moves on to consider the PK and remote perception research in detail, along with its implications. This is all summarised with admirable detail and conciseness, giving readers the chance to evaluate individual cases as well as overall patterns.

As readers will be aware, the results of such research pose a major challenge to existing physicalist assumptions, and the authors consider this in the final two sections, advancing their own model in the process. They remind us that our ideas are the outcome of both sensory and philosophical filtering, contending for their part that 'mind is the ultimate organising principle that creates reality through its ongoing dialogue with the unstructured potentiality of the Source.' (p. 293) They analyse a spectrum of reactions to this kind of research, recommending an extension of the range of science to alleviate existing dichotomies and limitations. They quote from Jung to the effect that our questions impose limits on Nature and 'prevent her from answering out of the fullness of her possibilities since these possibilities are restricted as far as practicable.' It is high time for science to take its blinkers off and recognise that scientific ideas themselves 'are inescapably an activity and product of the human mind' and to integrate subjective and objective dimensions into a wider scientific view.

The Out-of-Body Experience**Anthony Peake (SMN)** – foreword by Ervin Laszlo – www.anthonypeake.com/forum*Watkins 2011, 222 pp., £10.99, p/b.*

The thesis of this fascinating and wide-ranging book is that lucid dreaming, out of body experiences, remote viewing and astral travel are all elements of the same phenomenon, as also hypothesised in the earlier work of Celia Green and Charles McCreery published about 20 years ago. However, Anthony extends this with an up-to-date consideration of neurology, psychedelics and quantum physics, arguing that the OBE is not so much an extrasomatic as an introsomatic experience, a journey into inner space. This is also broadly the position of physicist and mystic Michael Whiteman, who is mentioned here, and involves the idea of multiple parallel spaces, which can account for discrepancies in perception. It is easy to forget that our normal perception of the physical world is a construction based on a very narrow band of reality and that communications from the spiritual realms beyond suggest that earth life now seems like a dream.

In the excellent chapter on physics, Anthony discusses the Copenhagen interpretation, the Many Worlds interpretation and the Implicate Order interpretation of quantum mechanics. The first suggests that reality is created by the act of observation, the second that there may be many parallel worlds or spaces, and the third that the implicate order holographically folds within itself the whole universe, past and future. The emerging picture is that we are all creating our own universe as we go along, as is every other consciousness. This means that 'our model of the phenomenal world is created internally, and then projected outwards to create the illusion of a real place located in space and time.' (p. 190) The final chapter draws on Laszlo's akashic field hypothesis in relation to the zero point field along with the work of Stuart Hameroff and Sir Roger Penrose on the role of microtubules to propose a reconciliation of materialism and idealism, science and spirituality. It is a highly original and engaging hypothesis - any reader who already thinks that they understand this area will reconsider their views after reading this lucid book.

Unbounded! – Vol 1**Rolf Ulrich Kramer (SMN)***Shaker Media 2016, 364 pp., no price given, p/b.*

As the title suggests, and contrary to our everyday experience, consciousness in fact knows no bounds and, in conducive circumstances, will reach beyond what we consider to be the boundaries of the known through a process that the author calls MindWalking. Using many case histories interspersed with reflections on themes such as the mechanics of ESP, memory and imagination, the Internet of souls and spirits and spiritual hyperspace, the reader is drawn into a highly informative discussion of the further reaches of consciousness. A good deal of this work involved getting to the root of traumas, and here Rolf encourages his clients to relive experiences until they lose their charge and can be fully accepted and integrated, thus establishing what he calls a new tolerance level. Sometimes, the root of the pattern lies in a previous life, and there is a fascinating case involving a man who died in a climbing accident and was able to make contact with his companion of the time and release him from his misconceived guilt. The idea of mental files is very useful, as well as mental fields established through intention and attention. People who do not realise they have died can be a problem for the living, as explained in another case where the professional was able to communicate with the mind of the deceased. Rolf's theoretical framework suggests the new term 'vitality being' for that entity that manages the body, while our spiritual being manages the mind. Psychotherapists will find this book of special interest for its clinical content, while other readers will find that it expands their understanding of consciousness and reality and the patterns that shape us.

Mind out of Time**Nick Greaves (SMN)** – www.mindandmemory.net*Self-published 2016, 167 pp., no price given, p/b.*

Nick has been working on his ideas involving quantum entanglement, the mechanism of memory and duplication theory for over 35 years, with very interesting parallels to the work of Rupert Sheldrake on morphic resonance. Here he explains his work in the form of a novel where the theorist meets an interested entrepreneur who was prepared to fund a crucial experiment testing his work and the results of which are subsequently published in a prestigious journal. The writing is engaging and clear with many ironic asides and wry observations about life. As the proponent might have expected, the reactions to the successful experimental results are mixed – and the entrepreneur is more interested in technical applications such as the networking of separate minds, while the central character feels that his insight into interconnectedness could change the way we relate to each other. Rupert's alias in the novel is Roland Smethwick, and his work provides an important bridge for the entrepreneur Lucius. The content is inevitably technical, but the dialogues help to probe and elucidate the key ideas.

An Evolutionary Leap – Colin Wilson on Psychology**Colin Stanley***Karnac Books 2016, 123 pp., £17.99, p/b.*

This excellent primer on Colin Wilson's writings on psychology provides a distillation from his many important books by one of the foremost Colin Wilson scholars, beginning with his early correspondence with Abraham Maslow and his work on Reich and Jung as well as articulating his own existential psychology. In this respect, the intentionality of Husserl is central in determining the quality of our perception, and therefore of our inner lives. It is a refrain in Wilson's work that we tend to see reality too narrowly, confining ourselves unnecessarily when we could be living in a greatly expanded consciousness. The editor does the reader a great favour by summarising and quoting from nine books and listing all the related essays on psychology as well. He also provides a moving tribute, observing that Wilson's work extended to 180 books, 600 essays, 162 introductions to other books and 350 book reviews. It is an ideal introduction to this aspect of Wilson's work.

The Secret of Working Knowingly with God**Walter Russell***University Science and Philosophy (www.philosophy.org) 1993, 66 pp., \$7, h/b*

This short book is adapted from a talk given by Walter Russell in 1946, and explains the story of his inner life, going back to the age of seven when he first had a blissful experience and realised that what he learned at school was of very little use. Consequently, he left at 10 and had no specialist training at all. This did not stop him becoming musician and composer, illustrator, painter, sculptor, author, architect, philosopher and scientist. His work is a pure expression of genius with the supreme force working within him giving him knowing beyond thinking. The story of his miraculous healing recovery from bubonic plague is quite extraordinary as he applied the immediate knowledge of the healing principle on the spot to himself at a point when the undertaker had already arrived and he had been pronounced dead by three physicians. I have in the past recommended his books *The Secret of Light* and the short book about him by Glenn Clark called *The Man Who Tapped the Secrets of the Universe*. Here you have his story in his own words. It is sobering to be reminded, in view of the current world situation, that 'man's world is the sum total of man's thinking. It is what our world thinking makes it' - so in order to change the world, we literally need to change our thoughts, finding and expressing the divine within.

The Invisible Force of Love

Ulisse Di Corpo

Omega Interculturale 2016, 53 pp., €5, p/b.

And some readers will recall, Ulisse spoke at the 2015 Beyond the Brain conference, and helped us organise our recent meeting in Rome. In this engaging account, he describes how he arrived at his important insights involving syntropy and the interface between physical and nonphysical energy, visible and invisible worlds, the head and the heart. He illustrates this with examples of synchronicity, which he feels comes from the future while causality from the past. The experience of Steve Jobs provides a further interesting instance and encouragement to follow your own inner voice, the compass of the heart based on the title - the invisible force of love. He expresses this in a theorem that when we are united to the universe in love, we are equal to ourselves, but the same does not apply to any accumulation of wealth and power. I was fascinated to learn of the Chinese *guanxi* system of giving red envelopes containing money on significant occasions, especially marriage. It is amazing to think that Chinese spouses receive on average between €250,000 and €400,000, based on a high rate of saving and which of course reinforces the social fabric. Ulisse helps readers become more sensitive to the interplay and intertwining of visible and invisible aspects of life.

Being in Balance

Dr Wayne W. Dyer

Hay House 2016 (2006), 141 pp., £8.99, p/b.

As the title suggests, this book is about recovering and maintaining balance in everyday life while making maximum positive use of the powers of the mind in a state of harmony and alignment. Each chapter looks at a specific kind of balance: dreams and habits, enjoyment and achievement, desires and addiction, appetite and health, prosperity and scarcity, spiritual and material. It is full of the kind of practical advice and insight that one has come to expect from the author. This often involves transforming our beliefs and monitoring any accompanying resistance, reminding ourselves that we get what we think about whether we want it or not. So dwelling on shortage and scarcity is incompatible with abundance. It also means going beyond the implicit programming of news and our reactions to it. Heaven is essentially a state of mind rather than a location, which includes our habitual view of others.

Psychology of Success

Alison and David Price

Icon Books 2016, 230 pp., £6.99, p/b.

There are many books on success, going back to the work of Napoleon Hill in the early 20th century. This one is clearly set out using all letters of the alphabet to convey the essential points in an actionable way. Even if you have read this kind of book before, it serves as a useful reminder. Among the chapters are activation, effort, fear, goals, learn, modelling, preparation, self belief, under pressure, visualisation and zeal. Each section has a 'try it now' element, as well as useful tips. We all tend to procrastinate and remain vague about our goals, especially in terms of the important but not urgent. The authors help readers to make the most productive use of their time, without neglecting the need for recuperation. Highly recommended.

ECOLOGY-FUTURES STUDIES

How Population Change Will Transform the World

Sarah Harper

Oxford 2016, 234 pp., £14.99, h/b.

This highly informative book is essential reading for anyone wanting to understand the differential trends in world population growth. Much debate and analysis is devoted to the combination of rising numbers and rising consumption. Here the emphasis is more on the different stages of demographic transition from high birth and death rates to lower rates of childbirth and lengthening lives, leading to ageing populations. Broadly speaking, Africa is still struggling to reduce fertility, the Middle East faces the greatest challenges in terms of youth bulge and therefore unemployment, while advanced economies in Europe and the US face ageing populations. Migration plays a role at all stages, for instance in terms of labour supply and the fact that immigrants tend to have higher birth rates, which in turn will lead to a different population composition. All this is summarised in a detailed table on page 12. For the author, the fundamental challenges are to maintain wellbeing across the lifespan, to reduce inequality within generations and ensure equity between generations.

Harper analyses the historic drivers of population growth in terms of sanitation, public health, nutrition and medical advances. She introduces the term epidemiological transition, where death due to infectious diseases is replaced by chronic degenerative diseases of civilisation. She tends to account for the rise of the latter partly through extended lifespans rather than stressing the importance of lifestyle in maintaining health. Two-thirds of the world's countries are now below the population replacement level of 2.1 children per woman of childbearing age. In 1950, the European figure was 2.5, which had fallen to 1.5 by 2010. In addition to the education of women, the author attributes a part of this trend to the rise of individualism. She discusses the so-called grey burden with some interesting figures on longevity and disability, but I wondered if some of the extrapolated figures for longevity will be curbed by the rise of obesity and diabetes.

The Middle East shows the greatest demographic for insurgency, highlighting the need to provide employment opportunities for the young, an issue that applies across advanced countries and is likely to increase because of robotics. Harper shows how the youth bulge can in some cases lead to an economic demographic dividend. While discussing countries where fertility is still too high, she cites Niger and does not question the extrapolation from 16 million today to 55 million in 2050 to 140 million by the end of the century in a country where half are already without adequate food. Even the figure for 2050 it is surely wildly wrong. The final chapter considers policy options in relation to the various interconnected challenges outlined, with a useful table on page 164. The real difficulty is knowing how these factors will create complex feedback loops in view of overall age-structural changes and the continuing digital revolution. The scale of our collective challenge is revealed by figures on the last page, where we learn that, over the next 15 years, some 2 billion babies will be born, 2 billion children will need to start school and 1.2 billion young adults will need to find work in a world where the fastest growing age group will be the over 60s. A thought-provoking read from Oxford's James Martin School.

The Sharing Economy

Arun Sundararajan

MIT Press 2016, 240 pp., £19.95, h/b.

Subtitled 'the end of employment and the rise of crowd-based capitalism', this brilliant and elucidating book describes the emerging new ways of organising economic activity that are already impacting on the traditional corporate centred model. The new system is decentralised, peer-to-peer and on demand; it blurs the distinction between personal and professional, gift and market economy and is coming to the fore most strongly in accommodation, transport and freelance labour. It is based on the exploitation of underused resources, such as spare rooms, and one of the most interesting implications is the evolution of trust based on online communication and collaboration. Many of its effects are seemingly paradoxical: is it capitalist or socialist, does it destroy jobs or create work? Does it represent the empowered entrepreneur or the disenfranchised drone? The answers are complex - a bit of both.

One can recognise creative destruction in this process and a shift to an asset light economy where it is no longer necessary for everyone to own a car or even an expensive music device if music is immediately downloadable. The author is abreast of all current developments and the major exponents of the new model such as Airbnb, Kickstarter and Lyft. He outlines the background drivers in terms of the consumerisation of the digital, the digitalisation of the physical and decentralised peer-to-peer exchange. He then discusses platforms and what he calls blockchain economies with respect to value creation. The second part looks at the effects in terms of economic impact, regulation and consumer protection, and the future of work. This last point has had the most visibility with the recent controversies involving Uber. What has been called a Fourth Industrial Revolution is clearly here to stay, and you should certainly read this book if you want to understand the implications of this development.

How Change Happens

Duncan Green

Oxford 2016, 268 pp., £16.99, h/b.

In this remarkable theoretical and practical book, the author proposes a workable account of how change happens, based on his many years of experience, currently as senior strategic adviser to Oxfam GB. He begins by outlining his power and systems approach, with chapters on systems thinking, the reality of power and shifts in social norms. Change agents have to be flexible, strategic, open to feedback and failure, and able to broker relationships. The realities of power are frequently ignored by change agents, but the author shows how it critical to understand and work with them. He distinguishes between power within, power with, power to, and power over, observing that resistance tends to come from institutions, ideas and interests. Understanding how norms of formed and evolved is also highly significant, as they clearly change over time. Throughout the book, he gives relevant case studies, for instance in relation to culture and norms of female genital mutilation. One comes to a better understanding of pressures within social systems in such cases.

The second part deals with institutions and the importance of history, discussing how states evolve, the machinery of law, accountability, political parties and the media, how international systems shape change, and transnational corporations as drivers and targets of change. It becomes important to know how these various systems and organisations operate, so as to be able to navigate skilfully and effectively. It is also important not to make generalisations about the behaviour of companies or institutions, and this brings one back to the realities of power already referred to. The last part of the book discusses civil activism, leadership and the power of advocacy – when does one use confrontation and when collaboration, insider or outsider tactics? The author has extensive knowledge and experience of different

forms of advocacy and how to make the most of windows of opportunity. The last chapter pulls the arguments together, looking at domains of change and adaptation of change strategies as well as discussing the overall implications of the book for activist organisations. Whatever kind of change you are involved in, you will undoubtedly benefit from the rich insights contained in this book.

Unprecedented Climate Mobilization

Elizabeth Woodworth and David Ray Griffin

Clarity Press Inc 2016, 144 pp., \$14, p/b.

This is a practical follow-up to David Griffin's seminal book on climate change, *Unprecedented*, which I reviewed in these pages last year. It builds on the final chapters a year on from Paris, which looks increasingly like another episode of 'deadly delay' as governments continue to promote business as usual, putting us on an eventual collision course with natural systems. The problem is that climate change is a long emergency rather than an immediate crisis, which makes it much harder to galvanise the kind of World War II mobilisation that the authors - and Lester Brown more generally - think is essential. However, it was encouraging to read that a motion to declare a World War II style climate emergency was passed almost unanimously at a full Democratic Party Platform Committee meeting, although the subsequent election of Trump and his choice of director of the EPA has very different implications. A number of chapters are devoted to leadership in political, media and other sectors, but the real hope has to lie in citizen activism using social media as well as underground strategies. The encouraging message is that it really only takes 5% of the population to mobilise to put pressure on governments to change their policies. The legitimacy of power can be questioned, and it is clear that we need, as the authors suggest, a massive interventionist democracy involving the worldwide network of climate activists, now supported, significantly, by Pope Francis. On a personal level, we each have a responsibility to act on behalf of our children and grandchildren.

Men without Work

Nicholas Eberstadt

Templeton Press 2016, 206 pp., \$ 12.95, p/b

Subtitled 'America's invisible crisis', this book describes the rise in the number of men in the US who are out of work and not seeking any to a figure of some 10 million. The actual work rate of men between 25 and 54 was lower in 2015 than in 1940, and between 1948 and 2015, the work rate for US men 20 and older fell from 85.8% to 68.2%. This figure is largely hidden because it does not appear in the unemployment rate. Three quarters of this change is not due to ageing effects, and this economically inactive group is now the main category of men without jobs. The author analyses the group's use of time, finding that they spend the same time on caring for household members as employed men, but of course more than double on socialising, relaxing and leisure as more immediate sources of gratification. The group draws a disproportionate amount of disability benefit, and also contains many men with prison records – the US has the highest incarceration rate per head in the world, and it is difficult for such people to re-enter the labour market. It is also symptomatic of a larger civic disengagement. As the two commentators at the end of the book argue, Eberstadt's solutions are far from comprehensive, and it is no simple matter to revitalise the job generating capacities the US economy in an international context. However, the author has highlighted an important trend for government to address, along with the huge challenges for young people - especially the unskilled - to find work.

Companion Plants and How to Use Them

Helen Philbrick and Richard B. Gregg

Floris Books 2016, 138 pp., £8.99, p/b.

The first version of this book came out as early as 1943 and is based on the observation that certain plants seem to affect others growing near them in both a favourable and unfavourable manner. This knowledge can enable us to improve the quality of our food and flowers and reduce losses due to pests and disease. Plants are understood as metabolic systems reacting in specific ways to environmental influences. The format is an A-Z compendium that can be consulted by farmers and gardeners according to their challenges. One learns that nasturtium can protect broccoli from aphids, that celery benefits from leaks growing nearby, as can raspberry from tomatoes. There is also an extensive table of insect pests and plant controls on page 70. Readers will be able to test and confirm the suggestions for themselves.

DEATH AND DYING

Viva

Marilyn Barry

Inner Way 2016, 191 pp., no price given, p/b.

This beautiful and empowering book tells the story of Vivian King, a psychosynthesis teacher and student of Alice Bailey who struggled to recover after a near fatal car crash, passing over some two years later. Marilyn gives the background of her friend's life and work, chronicling her journey and friendship in the process. There are some moving letters on important principles of life, and one to her physicians explaining how the car crash that left her physical vehicle disabled and beside the road: 'the headlights didn't focus, the horn didn't honk, and the wheels didn't turn.' After almost 2 years, the car is still spluttering and doesn't move - she had very little physical capacity, and eventually decides that it is time to move on. She contributes some wonderful insights to her own funeral (pp. 83-5) including that all of our experiences are opportunities to develop particular qualities, so our reaction is more important than the circumstances themselves. Interestingly, she refers to internalising the external world between birth and death, then, after death, externalising what we have internalised so that our inner world becomes our outer world (p. 103). Marilyn and her fellow triangle meditators report many fascinating experiences connecting with Vivian's post-mortem state as a teacher gradually moving towards a more formless realm. As a group, they constitute one of many world servers dedicated to the transformation of human consciousness. This work in itself conveys an inspiring message.

If Morning Never Comes

Bill Vandebush

Clairview Books 2016, 290 pp., £14.99, p/b.

This account of a soldier's near death experience on the battlefields of Vietnam in the 1960s is both harrowing and inspiring. The reader learns about the training regime and the psychological effects of being in a battle situation, including killing people and seeing people killed. This has an emotionally numbing effect, so soldiers eventually focus on their own survival, realising at the same time that they are no longer fully human. In April 1969, the author took a direct hit from a piece of red-hot shrapnel and saw the remains of his right eye drop into his helmet. He lay down to die, and at that point had a near death experience where he encountered his grandfather and a Great Spirit. This sustained him through very dark times of his recovery, but this proceeded at an unexpected rate due to his inner state. There is an incredibly moving scene where a man he had previously not liked is fatally injured, and dies in his arms. Just afterwards, he is shot again in the chest, but tells the man in parting that he will go to a beautiful place. The book goes on to describe the author's life and challenges, recounting how he returns to the values of the light and follows the guidance of Spirit to keep his life on track. This involves embracing the whole of life and being of service – it is a familiar message from the NDE, but no less valuable for that.

GENERAL

Self-Tracking

Gina Neff and Dawn Nafus

MIT Press 2016, 233 pp., £11.95, p/b.

It has recently become quite fashionable to use apps to self-track, for instance steps taken in a day, hours billed or people friended. In this way, people turn their experience into quantifiable data for monitoring and evaluation purposes. By the end of 2016, a huge 110 million wearable sensors will be shipped worldwide. This trend is clearly driven by technology, but the authors also attribute it to biomedicalisation in terms of measuring the body or even moods - a whole chapter is devoted to this. The motivations point to various forms of self-improvement, including health. At the same time, such data can be collected by manufacturers and commercial interests so as to improved targeted advertising, so interesting privacy issues arise from this.

The authors offer their own advice on getting going with self tracking, including not being too ambitious about measuring things – otherwise there will be a tendency to fall off, as evidenced by industry data indicating that 60% of these devices fall into disuse within 6 months. Speculating about the future of self tracking, the authors comment on the fact that elements of surveillance and control are mixed with empowerment and playfulness. Access to and control of data is critical, and much of the future lies in the hands of users. A 2014 Symantec report on security and privacy of activity trackers found that they could easily be turned into surveillance trackers, and that the apps sent user data to an average of five different Internet domains, with few users being aware of this. This informative book gives pause for reflection about an important emerging technology.

Foresight

Edited by Lawrence W. Sherman and David Allan Feller

Cambridge University Press 2016, 179 pp., £12.99, p/b.

This fascinating interdisciplinary volume began as a series of Darwin College lectures on foresight, asking how attempts to foresee the future actually change it rather than simply predicting it. As one contributor puts it, 'foresight is not simply looking forward, but anticipating future change and acting on that vision.' Of course, foresight may be wrong, as we are able to appreciate in hindsight, but it can still be valuable. It can also be related to self-fulfilling prophecy. There are two chapters on foresight in ancient civilisations, where omens, dreams and divination come up, and their relationship with wisdom and prudence is discussed.

Bridget Kendall discusses foresight in journalism, giving an example of how she saw Putin change over a period of time – with hindsight, it is easy to spot errors of judgement, but foresight is itself a judgement. On the whole, she feels that journalists are not that good at foresight because they 'seek to back up assumptions with reasoned and fact-based arguments' rather than making leaps into the future, although she does give a good example of Gillian Tett anticipating the 2008 financial crisis, probably because of her training in anthropology rather than her expertise in economics. Other essays cover foresight and fiction, foresight in the scientific method with a discussion of Karl Popper, music and space weather. Then there is a particularly interesting lecture on a longitudinal study showing a distinct correlation between lack of self-control in children with later lack of financial foresight (p. 138). The reader can readily appreciate the value of accurate foresight in our turbulent world and it is not hard to think of a few examples over the last few months where it has been lacking. However, what is also lacking is a compelling vision of a positive future embodying what one might call constructive foresight.

What is Wrong with Us?

Edited by Eric Coombes and Theodore Dalrymple

Imprint Academic 2016, 236 pp., £14.95, p/b.

Subtitled 'essays in cultural pathology', this volume embodies serious social, aesthetic and political criticism in an age where judgements of value are suspect and relativised in what one might call the corruption of criticism. High culture and judgements based on expert knowledge are considered elitist, while much of what passes for art would have scandalised previous generations - to think that Tracey Emin is a Royal Academician along with the likes of Constable and Turner... The book covers a wide range of themes, including architecture, engineering, language, values, politics, State art, celebrity culture and the decline of the sacred. Many essays are justifiably acerbic, especially the very entertaining contributions by Theodore Dalrymple on architecture and on celebrity. He regards Le Corbusier as an intellectual and moral terrorist and is not reticent in confronting complacent views. Then he considers celebrity culture as a contract between persons of modest attainments on the one hand and masses of frustrated people on the other. Other essays expose the shallowness of so-called British values and the relationship between politics, language and spin as well as the pretence and posturing inherent in much modern art, defended by state-sponsored councils. Even more seriously, the last essay on conserving the sacred remarks that all societies, including secular ones, depend on sacrifice, commitment and devotion for their survival. A thought-provoking collection.

Red – the History of a Colour

Michel Pastoreau

Princeton University Press 2016, 213 pp., \$39.95, p/b.

The author of this beautifully illustrated and fascinating book is a historian at the Sorbonne, who has already written histories of blue and green, and his next book will be on yellow. By reading it, one becomes aware of the many associations of the colour, and in this case red has been primary in our culture. One only needs to think of the blood of Christ, the revolutionary flag, the red of power (including Cardinals), Santa Claus, the fires of hell and its symbolism of love, glory and beauty. It saw a decline with the austerity of the Protestant Reformation - there is a portrait of Luther in black - and then falls out of favour until re-gaining momentum as representative of progressive thought and services such as the Red Cross and fire emergency. Interestingly, blue took over from red in the Middle Ages, while standing for the Virgin Mary as opposed to Mary Magdalene. The many illustrations enhance the message and impact of the book and demonstrate the colour's varied cultural associations.

How to Grow Old

Marcus Tullius Cicero, edited and translated by Philip Freeman

Princeton University Press 2016, 196 pp., \$16.95, h/b.

This is a new translation of a classic book that was read with profit by the likes of Montaigne, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. It was written around 45 BC by Cicero in his early 60s on his country estate at a time when he had just lost his daughter. It takes the form of a dialogue about life and old age, and is full of wise observations. The Latin text is on the left-hand page, so scholars can refer to it. Cicero makes the important point that the sowing for a harvest of a good old age begins in youth with good choices as one builds up one's character and inner resources. He argues against common suppositions about old age, affirming that we can maintain an active life within certain limitations, and can continue to cultivate the mind as well as our garden - and in his case, especially vines. We can only expect to be respected if we have earned this through our actions. He observes that many negative perceptions of (grumpy) old people are in fact faults of character rather than of age. He is very philosophical about the prospect of death, commenting that we will either know nothing or the afterlife will be a pleasant state. In old

age, we can be grateful for our blessings and hopefully wise enough to leave the stage at the right time. His view of the soul is quite Platonic, which accounts for his vision of the afterlife. Besides, he observes, the soul remains invisible both while the body is alive and when it has passed away.

Tantra

Shashi Solluna

Hay House Basics 2016, 243 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This excellent book gives a detailed theoretical and practical account of the path from sex to spirit. Most of us are still brought up to split these parts of ourselves off from each other, which was also the case with the author trying to reconcile what she called her spiritual and party selves; she was amazed when she first encountered women in India who integrated sexuality and spirituality, ecstatic practice with meditation. She describes many crucial experiences along the way as she overcomes these polarities in an experience of unity and ecstasy in raising energy and consciousness. She describes the historical background and different paths before moving on to five core principles: everything is sacred, desire is a part of the divine, use polarity to attain unity, sublimate sexual energy and reach transfiguration. Many practices can either be done alone or with a partner, and there is almost inevitably a great deal of healing involved on the journey, as well as a real activation of creativity and energy so that we can meet each other the highest possible level. This means opening the heart and making a conscious commitment to love in one's close relationships. The chapter on conscious relationships is worth reading on its own, containing as it does so many constructive suggestions that readers can work with. Ultimately, tantra - literally meaning weaving - is an inclusive spiritual path that recognises interconnectedness, relates love with truth and builds community. As the author puts it, 'I see that we are all here to wake each other up through our love.'

Maria Thun Biodynamic Calendar 2017

Matthias Thun

Floris Books 2016, 64 pp., £7.99, p/b.

This annual publication is the Bible for biodynamic gardeners and farmers as it gives the best times for sowing and harvesting throughout the yearly cycle. The focus this year is on astronomical questions and how they relate to plant growth and there is a brief description of the history of biodynamics and the work of Maria Thun on both lunar and planetary influences. There are articles by her on the effect of the sun on plant growth, maximising plant fertility and nutritional value, and best practice for harvesting and storing seed. Then comes the calendar itself with best dates for sowing and harvesting.

When Wine Tastes Best 2017

Matthias Thun

Floris Books 2015, 48 pp., £3.99, p/b.

This is a biodynamic calendar for wine drinkers that also has a downloadable app on Apple. The introduction explains the major supermarkets now hold tastings for critics only on fruit and flower days, rather than leaf and root. The theory is that wine also responds to the influence of the moon, and readers are encouraged to experiment for themselves. There are also quotations from wine critics supporting the theory saying that the difference is obvious. This year, there is also an article on the quality of biodynamic wines and reflections on the health of biodynamic wines due to working in harmony with nature. As it happens, this evening we are tasting the first bottle of 2008 Hauts de Pontet Canet, which is one of the few biodynamic estates in Bordeaux. Re-reading this for proofing purposes, I can now tell you that it was delicious!