

# Paradigm Explorer



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The Scientific &  
Medical Network

# 2018

# NETWORK CALENDAR

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April 6-8	Mystics and Scientists 41, Latimer Estate – leaflet enclosed
July 6-8	Annual Meeting, Horsley Park - leaflet enclosed
September 15	Day conference to celebrate 80th birthdays of Keith Ward and Ravi Ravindra, Colet House
September 28-30	Continental Meeting in Bagni di Lucca, Italy, with Laszlo Institute
November 3-4	Beyond the Brain XIII – London venue tbc.

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## LONDON - CLAUDIA NIELSEN – 0207 431 1177 or email [claudia@cnielsen.eu](mailto:claudia@cnielsen.eu)

We meet at 38 Denning Rd NW3 1SU at 7 for a 7:30pm start. Nearest tube station is Hampstead (Northern Line) or Hampstead Heath (Overground). Cost is £10 for members and £12 for guests. Please confirm attendance so I can anticipate numbers. Friends and non-members are always welcome.

For more comprehensive information on presentations (to include synopsis and biographies) plus summaries of past ones, go to the London Group page of the SMN site at [www.scimednet.org](http://www.scimednet.org).

Please note that sometimes talks have to be rescheduled and information is sent via email so even if you are not in London but would like to be kept informed of changes, please send me an email and I will put your address on the circulation list.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

FEBRUARY Monday 19th

TIM FREKE

Emergent Spirituality – A New Worldview

MARCH Monday 19th

RUPERT SHELDRAKE PhD

Science and Spiritual Practice

APRIL Monday 23rd

Prof. JERRY KROTH

Chaos, Violence, War and Barbarism: why Humanity and Peace Will Prevail

MAY Monday 14th

Dr. LARRY CULLIFORD

Seeking Wisdom: A Spiritual Manifesto

JUNE Monday 18th

SIMON DUAN PhD

Digital Consciousness and Platonic Computation – Unification of Consciousness, Mind and Matter by Metacomputics

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## Notice to Contributors

All proposed contributions should be sent to the Editor by email as a Word and/or PDF file.

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PARADIGM EXPLORER is published three times a year by the Scientific & Medical Network, generally in April, August and December.

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(Members may apply to the SMN Office for password to access the Members Only area of the web site).

Editorial Board:  
John Clarke, Paul Kieniewicz

Printed by:  
Kingfisher Print & Design Ltd, Devon

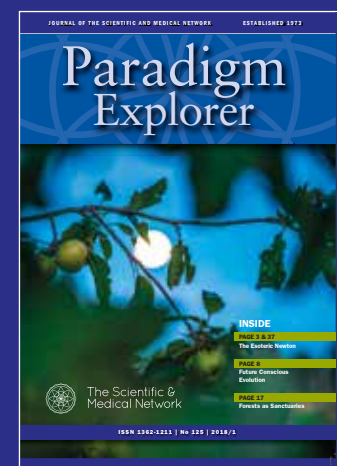
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Paradigm Explorer  
Registered office:  
151 Talgarth Road,  
London W14 9DA

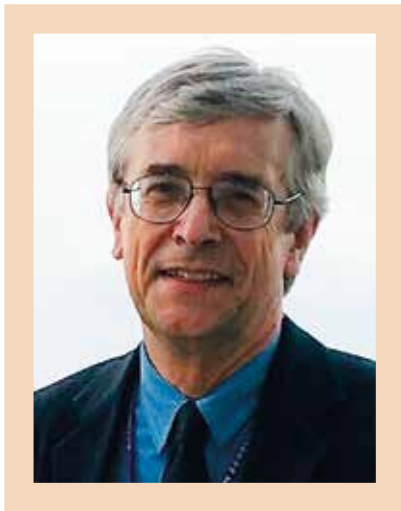
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*Gravitation, Apples and the Moon*



# Transitions

*From Dr Paul Filmore, Chairman, chairman@scimednet.org  
Forum: Editorial (Please comment via the members' website)*

A few days ago, I came back into our farmhouse after hours working in the garden. It was the tail end of dusk, as it moves into night. As I approached the house to open the old wooden door, I was filled with a strong sense of peace and continuity. Peace from having worked hard, and continuity from the awareness of walking in the steps of farmers for hundreds of years, as they returned home after a day's work well done. Opening and walking through the door was, and is, a transition to a new moment of potential in life. But how often do we 'see' and respond to these transitions? Even the most obvious 'transitions' like a sudden journey to hospital or Christmas, in our modern life style, get missed, or at least only a very small potential of their space to reflect, is utilised. It seems to me that nowadays we have to book an annual retreat holiday, where someone else gives us the structure to stop and reflect. In reality, we each of us daily have the moment of 'opening the door', after we return home. Is this so different from the monks with their many programmed times of prayer, interspersed with the work of the day?

Perhaps the most important function of the SMN is to provide opportunities for these transition moments. I have always taken very seriously the idea of the SMN as a safe space. This is a key prerequisite for enabling personal transition. I am sure you can identify others, and these may be different for different people, as we are all different. One prerequisite I will add, as I do believe it is relevant for the majority of people, is that of having access to challenging and stimulating 'material' within the Network. This can be either the articles here in Paradigm Explorer (note the name!) or through attending our programme of events. I believe we are developing our understanding of this

potential as an organisation and are rising to the challenge to realise this in our practical activities. This past year I again would like to thank the dedication of our staff and officers, and you our members, for supporting this.

This coming year we have again a fascinating Mystics and Scientists conference in April, leading our 2018 showcase programme. There are of course smaller regular events such as the local groups, which in many ways are just as important. Please contact the office if you need support to start or help revitalise a group. In addition, I would like to draw your attention to a new SMN offering which we have introduced, which in part may stimulate 'transitions'. This is the area of online courses, which are at this moment about to start their first week of seminars. We are very lucky to have both Natalie Tobert and Angelika Maria Koch putting their course material online and presenting. These are courses that they have run before, with hundreds of participants over the years, in association with other organisations. We hope that our online platform will allow access to many other people who would otherwise not get the opportunity of attending. Also as part of the SMN spirit is to have the safe space, our online courses keep face to face contact with our course leaders, via Skype or other interactive methods such as webinars. Please see our 'Future Events' page for these courses, or to link into our other activities.

Continuing the theme of transition, our staff and officers will soon be attending our annual, aptly named, 'retreat', even though we also do a serious amount of work. I hope that in our planning and thinking, we all remember that the SMN has a place to help aid personal and thus societal transition. And to do this, we need to provide the 'safe space' and the appropriate level of challenge. 'Space' can imply time, and time of a certain quality, allows reflection leading to transition. I leave you with the words of William Henry Davies, to re-remember a foundation stone of transition.

*What is this life if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.  
No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep or cows.  
No time to see, when woods we pass,  
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.  
No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.  
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance.  
No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began.  
A poor life this if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.*



*A New year's greeting from the staff and officers of the SMN*



# Newton –

## ‘The Last Wonder-Child To Whom The Magi Could Do Sincere And Appropriate Homage’: How Religion Underpinned Science And Technology

*Edi Bilimoria*

*And ... does it not appear from Phaenomena that there is a Being incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent, who in infinite Space, as it were in his Sensory, sees the things themselves intimately ... Of which things the Images only carried through the Organs of Sense into our little Sensoriums, are seen and beheld by that which in us perceives and thinks. Query 28, Opticks (1717)*

*Initially drawn to Newton's profoundly religious and mystical nature through the imperious writings of H. P. Blavatsky and then Paul Brunton, Edi Bilimoria, a consultant engineer by profession and a classical pianist, has devoted a lifetime of study and research into Newton's esoteric philosophy and the philosophia perennis in general.*

### Abstract

The marriage and interlocking of science, religion and mysticism can arguably have no finer representative than the legendary Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), whose massive output contained far more works on theology than on science. The thrust of this paper is to show that the world of science and technology owes a tremendous debt to the discoveries of a profoundly religious man whose entire life's purpose was to discover the divine in all nature and to make the divine handiwork known to mankind through the laws of science. Accordingly, we provide specific, referenced examples from Newton's works to show that the notion of a mechanical, clockwork universe was an anathema to him, as was any notion of atheism. We stress, again with recourse to Newton's writings, that all mention of God and divinity pertains to the source of life and being in transcendence, having nothing to do with anthropomorphic ideas of a 'creator god' or 'intelligent designer' propounded by some fundamentalist sects. Whereas Newton's researches in theology and alchemy are (unwillingly) acknowledged in academic circles, this fact is certainly not known amongst the public in general; but far less known is the interlocking of science and religion (as just stated) in that it was Newton's genius to demonstrate divinity through the medium of science as we illustrate in his own words.

### Preamble



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During the Age of Enlightenment natural philosophy generally embraced both natural science and theology. However, towards the nineteenth century science became, by

degrees, increasingly materialistic – an idea that started with post Newtonian scientists who latched on to the mechanical aspects of Newton's theories whilst blithely ignoring their metaphysical basis. One example should suffice about the firmly entrenched early nineteenth century concept of the universe operated by virtue of blind mechanical laws. When Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749-1827), sometimes known as the Newton of France, presented his five volume *Mécanique Céleste* (Celestial Mechanics) to Napoleon, the Emperor remarked, 'You have given me this huge book without once mentioning the Author of our System'; and Laplace's allegedly famous reply was, 'Sir, I have no need of such a hypothesis'.<sup>1</sup> Leaving aside scholarly debates about the meaning of this famous remark, Laplace's retort (even if considered apocryphally), would appear to have upheld the theory of the mechanical, clockwork universe. But it was a remark that supposedly troubled Napoleon right to his last days in St. Helena. When Napoleon mentioned Laplace's retort to the equally great, but more modest mathematician Lagrange in whose works the name of God appeared endlessly, the latter replied, 'Ah! c'est une belle hypothèse; ça explique beaucoup de choses' ('Ah, it is a fine hypothesis; it explains many things'.<sup>2</sup>) One can sense the whiff of sarcasm in Lagrange's response, implying that Laplace's great book was just a description and no more.<sup>3</sup>

The 'machine paradigm' of the universe is most fashionable amongst internationally famous scientists even in our era, fuelled by popular scientific journalism, that science has fully and finally disposed of any need to invoke Divinity, with books having egregiously rhetorical titles like

'Blind Watchmaker' supposed to provide the evidence. So with the phenomenal progress of science since Newton's era, the reader may justifiably wonder what possible influence religion can have on science and technology. But the impact of religion upon the minds of legendary scientists is not uncommon, nor is it an aberration as the mainstream scientific milieu would like us to believe. In modern times, the great Nobel physicist Werner Heisenberg, who enunciated the principle of indeterminacy declared, 'The reality we can put into words is never reality itself. The first gulp from the glass of natural science might turn you into an atheist, but at the bottom of the glass, God is waiting for you'.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, it is not without benefit for a person to start his journey of exploration as an atheist rather than as 'a believer'; and that is because when the faint glimmers slowly brighten into the full and clear evidence about divinity, this will have happened as a result of personal enquiry and effort, instead of mute and unquestioning, still worse, blind, fundamentalist-indoctrinated belief in God, so called. In this paper we illustrate our case with arguably the finest example – the Emperor of scientists, Sir Isaac Newton, whose entire work and research which laid the principal foundation of the vast scientific and technological industry, was inspired by, and undertaken in Newton's words, in order to have 'an eye upon such principles as might work with considering men for the belief of a Deity; and nothing can rejoice me more than to find it useful for that purpose'.<sup>5</sup>

The popular notion of Newton is of course one of the world's greatest mathematicians and scientists, a cold and irascible personality and one who has been enshrined by his generations of scientists as the Founding Father of the Clockwork Universe – a mechanistic concept that Newton himself strenuously denied as we shall see in his own words. Whether in mathematics, mechanics, optics or chemistry, Newton was a figure of undisputed genius and innovation. In all his science, he saw mathematics and numbers as central. What is less well known is that he was devoutly religious and also saw numbers as providing a key to deciphering the esoteric meaning hidden in the scriptures. But until the Sotheby sale of Newton's alchemical, theological and other private papers in 1936, few people outside the Royal Society were aware that Sir Isaac Newton, whose book, the *Principia*, which changed science to its foundations, was not only one of England's greatest men of science, but also one of her most ardent students of mysticism. His tremendous and deep forays into alchemy, chronology, religious history and prophecy were so little, in fact hardly acknowledged until of late.

There are a few examples of hard-headed scientists who were forced to admit that Newton derived his knowledge by something more like direct contact with the unknown sources that surround us, with the world of mystery, than has been vouchsafed to any other man of science.<sup>6</sup> For example, Sir Robert Robinson, past President of the Royal Society, who, asking how Newton could be both a mathematician and a mystic, himself answered that it was because he 'perceived a mystery beyond and did his best to penetrate it';<sup>7</sup> or as Professor E. N. da C. Andrade FRS, was forced to confess, at the Tercentenary Celebrations in 1946,<sup>8</sup> that 'a mixture of mysticism and natural science is not unexampled'.<sup>9</sup>

In 1936 the economist John Maynard Keynes bought a large proportion of Newton's unpublished papers on theological, alchemical and other esoteric matters at the Sotheby sale of Newton's books and papers. Upon a careful study of this collection he gained an insight into the full range of Newton's interests expressing his views to a private audience at the Royal Society Club in 1942 that 'all his unpublished works on esoteric and theological matters are marked by careful learning and extreme sobriety of statement. They are just as sane as the *Principia*'.<sup>10</sup> Given this tribute by Lord Keynes, we suggest that Newton's teachings about divinity should be taken with utmost seriousness. However, this short extract would not do justice to a comprehensive explanation on Newton's ideas about religion and God. It is sufficient that we restrict our purview to demonstrating that for Newton, the Celestial Watchmaker, far from being Blind, was gifted with Divine Vision; nor was God a Delusion, rather the wellspring and raison d'être of the tremendous scientific discoveries bequeathed to humanity by one of the most profoundly religious men of his time.

### Newton's Religious Convictions

Concerning Newton's religious convictions, it is well known that he was an Arian<sup>11</sup> and for him, 'the great apostasy [the perceived fallen state of traditional Christianity, especially the Roman Catholic Church] was trinitarianism',<sup>12</sup> namely, that the Christ was not equal to the Father but distinct from the Father and therefore subordinate to the Father, acting 'as a divine mediator between God and man, who was subordinate to the Father Who created him'.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Newton rejected the orthodox doctrines of the immortal soul, a personal devil and literal demons.<sup>14</sup>

Fascinating and instructive as it would be to pursue Newton's religious ideas in

depth, they lie outside the scope of this paper. It is sufficient, therefore, that we adhere to our central objective of clearly demonstrating that Newton's religious convictions provided the foundation and motivation behind his legendary scientific discoveries and achievements. Our method will be first to summarise Newton's religious endeavours that were always contemporaneous with his scientific researches. Then to cite key passages from his vast religious *and* scientific output showing the interlocking of theology with science and the absurdity, in his view, of postulating the vast scheme of life and nature based on purely mechanical, physical laws, whilst ignoring their metaphysical origin and noumenon in the divine: in terms of the famous aphorism of Newton's great admirer, Einstein, 'Science without religion is lame; religion without science is blind'.<sup>15</sup>

### A Lifetime in Quest of 'The Author of Our System'

We state at the outset that for Newton, there was no intrinsic conflict between religion and science, which were interrelated, science being the emissary of religion, proclaiming its praise to the divine. In both science and religion, he drew upon a common approach: a foundation of facts, historical and natural based upon the widest sources. Newton's life of 85 years spanned the period of his childhood and youth at his ancestral home at Woolsthorpe Manor, his years at Cambridge (of which 1666 is generally acknowledged as being his *annus mirabilis*) and finally his London period of international prestige; and during the whole of his long life right to his last days, he was dominated by religion in terms of the search for the source of heaven and earth – the 'Author of Our System', so to say, in Napoleon's words – see above.

Newton took the Biblical Commandments and moral injunctions in deadly earnest, his early Notebooks showing his religious zeal and his conviction of all knowledge as a revelation of God. In the same shorthand that Samul Pepys used for his famous diaries, Newton recorded all his sins against God in a Book of Confessions; fifty-eight in all, as for example: 'Neglecting to pray'; 'Swimming in a kimmel [a tub] on Thy day'; 'Having unclean thoughts words and actions and dreames'.<sup>16</sup> An *open* Bible was Newton's daily guide to conduct, a sin in thought was tantamount to a sin in deed – there was little difference.

His Cambridge Notebooks disclose the grand universality of his inquiries.

In addition to his output on mathematics, natural philosophy, optics and astronomy, plus all-night experiments in chemistry and alchemy, he researched every Biblical manuscript he could lay his hands on, and producing an enormous number of writings on theology, chronology, interpretations of mythology and demonstrations of prophecy in the historical world. Cryptic texts were treated as hieroglyphs to which he could provide the key by analogy between the world natural and the world political, each phrase and image in the prophecies being precisely linked to specific historical events, justifying the equivalences with erudite reasoning.<sup>17,18,19</sup>

During the last decades of his life in London, in addition to all his worldly duties at the Mint and Royal Society, Newton's theological and historical researches continued unabated. The Sotheby sale of his virtually unpublished private papers catalogued some 200,000 words on Chronology, 1,000,000 words on Religious matters and 4 Volumes containing 1000 folios on chronology, theology, ecclesiastical history and church doctrine.<sup>20</sup> *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended and Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* were published posthumously in 1728; together they provide a chronology of world history, profane and sacred.

To draw this part to a close, we remark that if the contents of a learned man's library be an indication of the range and depth of his enquiries and provides a clue to the quality of his mind, then it is instructive to note that of the 1752 books in Newton's collection, some 30 per cent were scientific (mathematics, optics, chemistry) and the remaining 70 per cent comprised theology, alchemy, literature and a host of other subjects. He possessed 477 books on theology (constituting over 27 per cent of his entire collection), including 30 Bibles in 5 languages, plus Walton's enormous 6 volume Bible with texts in Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, Ethiopian, Chaldee, Samaritan, Arabic, Persian and Latin which must have allowed him a feast of thorough comparative study.<sup>21</sup> Scattered throughout his output are voluminous papers on the nature and meaning of divine prophecy. He emphasized the need first to learn the language which lay in grasping the symbolism. He stressed the importance of the law of analogy and showed how such analogies operate.

If the above has yet to convince the reader that the notion of a mechanical clockwork universe was an anathema to Newton, the following extracts should, hopefully, provide ample confirmation.

## Interlocking Science and Divinity

Newton diligently sought the Creator through His Word – principally, the Bible – and His works – creation, as discovered through science.

### *Arguments in Proof of a Deity*

Richard Bentley was one of England's leading theologians, with strong scientific interests who eventually became Master of Trinity College, Cambridge. In his series of lectures *A Confutation of Atheism*,<sup>22</sup> he endeavoured to present Newtonian physics in a popular form, and to frame them so as to provide proof of the existence of an intelligent Creator. The outcome of his correspondence on this matter with Newton, then living in Trinity College, was the famous *Four Letters from Sir Isaac Newton to Doctor Bentley Containing Some Arguments in Proof of a Deity*.<sup>23</sup> In these letters Newton was careful to exclude any comments that could be regarded as speculative. Examining the letters we find Newton referring to Deity in terms such as: Counsel and Contrivance of a voluntary Agent, Author of the System, intelligent Agent, the effect of Counsel, a Cause to be not blind and fortuitous, but very well skilled in Mechanics and Geometry, the Creator, effect of Choice rather than Chance, a divine Power, a divine Arm, a Deity. Furthermore, this writer has counted over 800 such references to Deity in Newton's writings. There may well be more!

Why such a profuse number of terms to refer to Deity? Surely, in order to make the point that Deity cannot be limited to an identifiable form or to anthropomorphic concepts, but is to be regarded in the nature of boundless potentiality (consciousness). Hence the only way to define the ineffable in language is to use various terms that represent the innumerable expressions and aspects of the limitless potentiality. (Various religions, such as Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Islam have also resorted to a plethora of names in order to denote that which is beyond words.)

### *Against the Clockwork Universe*

At the outset of his *Principia* in Definition VIII, Newton took the greatest care to make clear that he did not use the word 'attraction' with regard to the mutual action of bodies in a physical sense. To him it was, he said, a purely mathematical conception involving no consideration of real and primary physical or mechanical causes.

I use the words attraction, impulse, or propensity of any sort towards a centre, promiscuously, indifferently, one for another; considering those forces not physically, but mathematically: wherefore the reader is not to imagine that by those words I anywhere take upon me to define the kind, or the manner of any action, the causes or the physical reason thereof, or that I attribute forces, in a true and physical sense, to certain centres (which are only mathematical points).

Indeed, the very title of Newton's book that shook science to its core is *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*; it is not 'Mechanical (or Mechanistic) Principles of Natural Philosophy'.

Then in one of the most celebrated passages in all science, the famed *General Scholium* to the second edition of the *Principia* (1713), Newton writes:

The Supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect ... And from his true dominion it follows that the true God is a living, intelligent, and powerful Being ... He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient; that is, his duration reaches from eternity to eternity; his presence from infinity to infinity ... He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but endures and is always present. He endures forever, and is everywhere present; and by existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space. In him are all things contained and moved; yet neither affects the other: God suffers nothing from the motion of bodies ... He is utterly void of all body and bodily figure, and can therefore neither be seen, nor heard, nor touched; nor ought he to be worshipped under the representation of any corporeal thing.<sup>24</sup>

However, the reader should *beware* that all this has nothing to do with the naïve and literal notion of 'intelligent design by a creator god' propounded by latter day Christian creationist-fundamentalists; it is all to do with pointing to our transcendent source in divinity. Is this not evident in phrases like 'a Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect', 'living, intelligent', 'utterly void of all body and bodily figure', 'can therefore neither be seen, nor heard, nor touched', where Newton makes it plain that Deity (God) is *anything but* an anthropomorphic being or 'creator-designer' of the clock (universe); on the contrary, that He is in the nature of an impersonal and omniscient principle of universal consciousness – in line with the core doctrines of the *prisca sapientia* (sacred wisdom) which he studied

so assiduously and which is slowly finding credibility in the science of our times through quantum physics and consciousness studies? It is quite ludicrous to ascribe to Newton the notion of God-the-non-physical-clockmaker fabricating a *physical* clock (the universe) and setting it in *physical* motion. Moreover, note the words, 'He endures forever, and is everywhere present; and by existing always and everywhere'; they clearly allude to both the transcendence and the immanence of the divine principle.

In private correspondence Newton implied that the force of Gravity was due to an immaterial influence:

**Tis inconceivable that inanimate brute matter should (without the mediation of something else which is not material) operate upon & affect other matter without mutual contact.**<sup>25</sup>

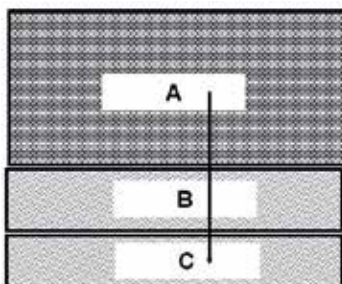
Warning against using the law of gravity to regard the universe as merely a machine, like a great clock, he writes:

**This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent Being. [...] This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion he is wont to be called 'Lord God' παντοκράτωρ [pantokratōr], or 'Universal Ruler'. [...]**<sup>26</sup>

### Divinity Demonstrated Through the Medium of Science

We shall give just one example of how he interlocks his entire system of thought all the way from Natural Philosophy to Divinity, via mathematics, by showing how he explains the distinction between Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Imagine three bodies on top of one another. A is a heavy body, say a stone slab, bearing directly on two almost weightless bodies, B and C. There is then a force in A, a force in B and the same force in C. But these are not three separate forces but ONE force originally in A, and by communication and descent, in B and C.



By analogy then, there is divinity in the Father, divinity in the son and divinity in the Holy Ghost, not three separate divinities but ONE communicated down from the Father. And as in saying there is but one force, that in body A, I do not deprive Bodies B and C of that force which they derive from A, so by saying there is but one God, Father of all things, I deprive not the Son and Holy Ghost and all beings of that divinity they obtain from the Father.<sup>27</sup>

Deity had unveiled a fragment of Himself to Newton not only in the order of nature, which was intuited by meditation and expressed mathematically in his natural philosophy, but also in myth and prophecy. This is why all his life Newton was busy unravelling Greek, Roman and Egyptian myths because they contained hidden truths on different levels. For him, there was no hard and fast division between the sciences as there is today. Natural philosophy embraced and included divinity. Accordingly, his science, mathematics and alchemy were all part and parcel of his all-encompassing quest for the Divine as expressed and witnessed through science, religion and esotericism.<sup>28</sup>

### Against Atheism

With remarkable prevision Newton anticipated the movement of science towards godlessness as evinced by Laplace and later with the mechanistic models underpinning the atheistic evolutionary theory that developed in the nineteenth century and extended well into our own era. Warning against an exclusively mechanical paradigm to explain all nature and life, he counselled:

**Blind metaphysical necessity, which is certainly the same always and everywhere, could produce no variety of things. All that diversity of natural things which we find suited to different times and places could arise from nothing but the ideas and will of a Being, necessarily existing.**<sup>29</sup>

Scientific inquiry, which then existed as Natural Philosophy, could not exist apart from 'the Maker', according to Newton. In fact, science was the perfect realm in which to discuss God. But we reiterate what we said above, that 'the Maker' is a universal principle bearing no relation to the anthropomorphic notion of an 'intelligent designer'.

In Query 31 of the *Opticks*, Newton makes an argument for the necessity of divine mediation:

For while comets move in very eccentric orbits in all manner of positions, blind fate could never make all the planets move one and the same way in orbits concentric, some inconsiderable irregularities excepted which may have arisen from the mutual actions of comets and planets on one another, and which will be apt to increase, till this system wants a reformation.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, can there be a more forceful refutation of atheism than this statement?

**Opposition to godliness is atheism in profession and idolatry in practice. Atheism is so senseless and odious to mankind that it never had many professors.**<sup>31</sup>

It is singularly unfortunate that Newton's speculation that 'Atheism ... never had many professors' has not come to pass. The number of post-Newtonian professors who, quite rightly, offer incense and myrrh at Newton's feet is legion; however, by ignoring the 'Author of Our System' these professors would presumably be, in Newton's view, 'senseless'.

### Concluding Insights

Although in the popular milieu, Newton is generally associated with discovering the law of gravity when he observed the fall of an apple in the garden at Woolsthorpe, Newton himself is quoted as saying:

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**Gravity explains the motions of the planets, but it cannot explain who set the planets in motion. God governs all things and knows all that is or can be done.**<sup>32</sup>

To address the question of 'who set the planets in motion' Newton's entire science was dedicated towards providing every evidence 'in proof of a Deity' and demonstrating the divine plan and works. It is of deepest import that in the two books that laid the bedrock and structure of modern science – *Principia* and *Opticks* – that profoundly religious scientist explicitly stated his acknowledgement of Deity, reinforced in his letters to Dr Bentley: 'Perhaps the whole frame of Nature may be nothing but various Contextures of some certain aethereall Spirits ... wrought into various forms at first by the immediate hand of the Creator, and ever since by the power of Nature ... became a complete Imitator of the copies sett her by the Protoplast'.<sup>33</sup>



*The main Business of natural Philosophy is to argue from Phaenomena without feigning Hypotheses, and to deduce Causes from Effects, till we come to the very first Cause, which certainly is not mechanical.*

(Query 28, *Opticks*, 1717)

#### Further Reading

- David Castillejo, *The Expanding Force in Newton's Cosmos*, Ediciones de Arte y Bibliofilia, Spain, First Edition, 1981.

An abridged version of a monumental, four volume work of immense erudition representing the fruits of some thirty years scholarship on Newton's (largely unpublished) alchemical, theological and miscellaneous esoteric papers. The author claims that Newton's entire work, ranging from his mechanics, optics, alchemy, theology and church history forms a single body of thought.

- Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs, *The Foundations of Newton's Alchemy or 'The Hunting of the Greene Lyon'*, CUP, 1975.

- — *The Janus Face of Genius: The Role of Alchemy in Newton's Thought*, CUP, 1991.

See also the book review by Richard S. Westfall 'Primacy of Spirit in the Universe', *The Times Higher*, 6 November 1992.

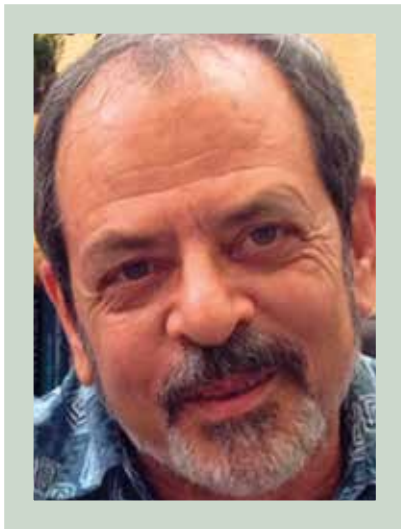
- Ayval Leshem Ramati, *Newton on the Secrets of Creation Hidden in the Jewish Temple*, Hebrew University Jerusalem, Israel (undated).

A book of exhaustive and fully referenced scholarship showing the uniqueness of Newton's insight into divine secrets as expressed in his science (especially calculus), numerology and theology, and comparing these with the thoughts of Leibniz.

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This article is a slightly edited version of a section from the chapter 'The Alchemy of Religion: From Inner Illumination to Love and Service in Action' in the book *Multiculturalism and the Convergence of Faith and Practical Wisdom in Modern Society* and is reproduced with the kind permission of the Editor Dr Ana-Maria Pascal and the publishers IGI Global.

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- 2 Clifford Goldstein, *The God Hypothesis*, September 2014, <http://www.signstimes.com/?p=article&a=40077637636.1350>. See also: Rouse Ball, *A Short Account of the History of Mathematics* (4th edition), Macmillan, 1908; *Mémoires du docteur F. Antommarchi, ou les derniers moments de Napoléon (The Last Moments of Napoleon)*, Vol. 1, Paris: Chez Barrois L'Ainé, 1825, p. 282.
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- 9 *Ibid.* See also *Newton Tercentenary Celebrations at the Anniversary Meeting of the Royal Society*, 1942.
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# An Introduction to Future Consciousness:

## The Path to Purposeful Evolution

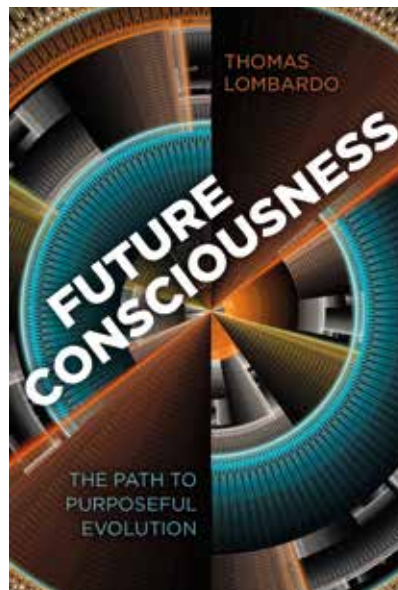
*Thomas Lombardo, Ph.D.  
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*“What am I to do?” is the perpetual question of our existence.” H. G. Wells*

*“What is the good future and how do we create it?” is the central challenge of human life, not only globally and collectively, but personally and individually. The question is also the pivotal issue of professional futures studies. In fact, the good future is the central goal behind all efforts (organizational, cultural, political, therapeutic, and self-help) to generate positive personal and collective change and solve the problems of today.*

### Creating a good future

In considering the ubiquity and importance of this question we are led to a deep insight regarding the human mind: being able to ask and attempt to answer this question meaningfully reflects our most distinctive and empowering mental capacity. We are able to envision and contemplate the future—indeed multiple possible futures—evaluate which possibilities are most desirable and preferable, and purposefully set goals, create plans, and pursue in action our visions of the good future. However well, however poorly, we exercise this critical human capacity—which I refer to as “future consciousness”—we are all futurists.



In my new book *Future Consciousness: The Path to Purposeful Evolution* (Lombardo, 2017) I propose that the holistic enhancement of this capacity is the most realistic, comprehensive, ethical, and empowering approach to the creation of the good future.

My central hypothesis is:

*We create a good future, defined as flourishing in the flow of purposeful evolution, through the heightening of future consciousness, which is achieved by developing a core set of character virtues, most notably and centrally wisdom.*

What follows is a selective outline of some key themes and arguments in the book.

### Evolution

Any sound theory of the good future needs to be grounded in a convincing, well-informed theory of reality, inclusive of human reality, since theories of the future and of the good always presuppose theories of reality and human nature

A first key principle of reality is cosmic evolution. As contemporary science and history reveal, the universe, from its most minute to most colossal structures, inclusive of earth, life, and humanity, is a dynamic and evolutionary phenomenon and creation. Within this ubiquitous evolutionary process, there is an arrow and asymmetrical direction to time, increasing complexity through hierarchal concatenation, ongoing creation of emergent new forms and laws, and

an open-ended future of possibilities, rather than a singular deterministic pathway. Moreover, humans are embedded multidimensionally in this evolutionary process; human evolution has occurred and continues to occur at biological, psychological, social-cultural, ecological, and technological levels. We are evolutionary beings. All in all, cosmic evolution provides an encompassing narrative framework for the past, present, and future of the universe and humanity.

Additionally, evolution appears to be accelerating (at least on the Earth), with more complex levels of reality in the hierarchal structure of the cosmos exhibiting progressively quicker rates of transformation and jumps further forward in complexity. As an expression of the ongoing creativity of the universe, new principles of evolutionary change and increasing complexity seem to come into play, speeding up the transformative process. *Evolution is evolving.*

Embedded in this cosmic evolutionary reality, human history shows accelerative change leading up to contemporary times. We can identify a series of significant transformational jumps in the complexity of human life, accelerating in succession over the centuries and millennia. Within present human reality, there is a clear transformational rush—a frantic and overloaded frenzy—with multiple interactive developmental trends along multiple dimensions. Humans are both “riding the wave” (and drowning at times) and participating in accelerative evolution. We are, with our ever-increasing array of new inventions, ideas, and modes of behavior and social interaction, the architects of accelerative evolution within our world.

Indeed, human evolution is a clear expression of the evolution of evolution. Through our conscious minds we have brought new, more empowering evolutionary principles into play. Through learning and culture; anticipation, foresight, and imagination; informed and thoughtful goal setting and planning; and purposeful action, humans intentionally and consciously guide change both within ourselves and the world around us. Humans engage in *purposeful evolution*, both at an individual level, guiding the flow and development of our consciousness and individual selves, and at the collective and historical level, attempting to direct the growth of civilisation and society. Humans, in fact, have been engaged in purposeful evolution for millions of years, ever since we articulated goals and values and executed planned and purposeful actions for guiding the flow of events and restructuring reality.

We are able to realise this evolution in evolution—this jump to purposeful evolution—through the capacity of future consciousness. We can envision and evaluate possible futures and act with a purposeful and thoughtful “eye” on the future, attempting to direct the future toward certain ends. Take this capacity away and not only are we no longer human, but civilisation would fall. We are the evolutionary universe becoming self-conscious and increasingly self-directive. To quote Julian Huxley, “We are nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself.”

### Reciprocity

A second key principle is reciprocity. Going back to ancient times, as expressed for example in the Taoist Yin-Yang, the universe has been described as interdependent complementarities. In more modern terminology, along similar lines, the concept of reciprocity—defined as distinct and yet interdependent realities—has been applied to numerous spheres of nature and society. Within contemporary science, a paradigm example of reciprocity within nature is the pervasiveness of open systems throughout the universe, in which not only are the constituents of nature “open” to interaction and influence from each other—through the exchange of matter, energy, and information—but this interactivity is essential for their continued existence and individual integrity. Nothing maintains or defines itself alone. The distinctive identity of an open system requires interaction with its ambient surrounding. We live in an “ecological universe”.

The open system concept is especially applicable to life on the earth. The diverse population of living forms on the earth structures the overall dynamics and composition of the earth as a holistic system, and vice versa.

At the human level, there are numerous reciprocities involving human civilisation and the natural environment of the earth. Human civilisation derives its sustenance from the environment and in numerous ways impacts and controls the environment. Further, there is a network of reciprocities among individual humans within a society, with each of us dependent upon others for our very existence, our complex ways of life, our social and professional roles, and our sense of personal identity, and yet reciprocally, each of us as individuals contributes into the social whole.

Humans and technology also form a reciprocity. Technologies are purposeful instrumental enhancements of mind and

body for achieving specific conscious ends. The functions of mind and body are extended and amplified through our machines. Humans are cyborgs, a functional synthesis of the technological and the bio-psycho-social. Further, we have been cyborgs for millions of years. As the human mind expresses itself through the body and purposeful behavior, the mind also extends into its tools and instruments as well. Through technology we possess “extended minds”. The creation and use of technologies is an important expression of the purposeful evolution of ourselves and our world. Tools are created and guided in their utilisation by the thoughts, future goals, and intentions of the tool users, and yet reciprocally tools mold the tool users as well.

Instead of abandoning technology because of its various presumed negative effects, we should pursue becoming “wise cyborgs” with an eye on benefiting our future evolution. A wise cyborg is an individual who creates and utilises mental technologies (technologies that support mental or psychological activities) to facilitate the pursuit and exercise of wisdom and all its component character virtues. The ideals of the mind, such as wisdom, self-responsibility, expansive knowledge, and virtue, should guide the uses and evolution of technology.

Of great relevance to the creation of a good future, the self-conscious human mind and the meaningful world form a reciprocity; each is relatively distinct and yet interdependent. As self-conscious minds we are physically embodied and ecologically embedded, but reciprocally, the meaningful environment—which we experience and understand through perception and thought, and in which we purposefully orchestrate our actions and live out our lives—is an interpretative selection and perspective of our conscious minds. Moreover, the world in which we find ourselves is in numerous ways a choice and a creation of our minds and consequent behavior. Through our purposeful minds and directed behaviour we shape and evolve our world, as our world provides the necessities and opportunities for our existence.

What is the connection between reciprocity and evolution within nature and human reality? One important connection is to be found in the process of *reciprocal evolution*. The cosmos as a whole evolves interactively; new entities emerge in connection with other entities, and continue to develop as interdependent collectives. Humans evolve reciprocally with technological evolution, and human society evolves in interaction with the surrounding environment. All in all, reciprocal

evolution means that we are all participating, with diverse effects upon each other, in the evolutionary process. To quote Teilhard de Chardin, “We are moving.” Reality is a collective interdependent motion. The circle of interdependency and the line of evolutionary progression synthesise in the pluralistic interactive dynamism of the world.

### The good future as flourishing in the flow of purposeful evolution

Within human history there are many competing ethical theories of the good, but any realistic and comprehensive theory of the good (and consequently the good future) needs to be resonant and consistent with the principles of reciprocity and evolution.

Given that various biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors reciprocally interact within human reality, the good necessarily involves all the major interactive dimensions of human consciousness (e.g., the self, emotion, and thought), as well as our relationships with other humans and nature and society as a whole. Any viable theory of the good needs to be psychologically holistic and psycho-socio-ecologically integrative.

Further, any realistic theory of the good needs to align with the evolutionary nature of reality and the distinctive evolutionary nature of human existence. We are purposeful, evolutionary beings existing within the flow of evolution; the flow of evolution is, indeed, within us. If nature, including human reality, is dynamic and evolutionary, then the good for humans needs to be conceptualised in dynamic and evolutionary terms. In particular, if our distinctive capacity is to facilitate purposeful evolution with an eye on the future, then the good for humans should align with this unique dynamic feature of our psycho-socio-ecological reality. It is unrealistic to pursue static and conservative ideals of the good (such as simple conservation or sustainability), since we live in an evolutionary and transformative universe. Moreover, since we are purposeful beings that impact the world, as well as the flow of our consciousness, it is impossible not to engage in purposeful evolution—to take a “hands off” position—unless we disengage our conscious human minds. In summary, the good future is realised in interactive and purposeful evolution.

Building on the concept of “flourishing” developed in positive psychology, I propose the idea of *flourishing in the flow of purposeful evolution* as a general theory of the good future. Flourishing for humans involves qualities such as dynamism,

growth, self-determination, purpose, interactivity within the world, creativity, and ongoing emotional and cognitive development. Importantly so, flourishing carries with it aesthetic, romantic, sensory, vitalising, and inspirational features; the good life is psychologically holistic and elevating, engaging the heart and the senses as well as the mind. At its core, our *primary moral imperative* is to flourish within purposeful evolution and contribute to the flourishing of others.

### Holistic future consciousness and the virtues of heightened future consciousness

As introduced above, purposeful evolution depends on future consciousness, which involves the abilities to desire and imagine, anticipate, think and plan, and purposefully act toward the creation of preferable futures. Purposeful evolution through future consciousness is our most distinctive and empowering mental ability.

I define “holistic future consciousness” as the multifaceted normal human ability that includes the total integrative set of psychological processes and modes of experience and behavior involved in our consciousness of the future. All our psychological processes and modes of consciousness, including perception and behavior; emotion and motivation; learning, memory, and understanding; anticipation, thinking, and planning; intuition and imagination; self-identity; and social interaction are involved in future consciousness and our experience and creation of the future.

All humans necessarily possess, as integral to their overall psychological functioning, some level of holistic future consciousness. Without holistic future consciousness a person would seem aimless, lost, mentally deficient, passive, and reactive. Indeed normal human consciousness flows into the future, contextualised by a remembered past, and consequently it is both unrealistic and counter-productive to attempt to live simply in the present. (Presentism, to whatever degree it can be realised, is a primordial mode of consciousness.) Yet holistic future consciousness significantly varies in level of development among individuals and groups and can be strengthened or enhanced through a host of different methods.

Viewing holistic future consciousness from a historical perspective, *it was the development and exercise of future consciousness in humans across the ages that primarily drove the evolution of human civilisation*, being integrally involved in the evolution of bonding,

coupling, and child rearing; hunting and gathering; instruments and technology; graphic art; trading and negotiation; agriculture; habitation and urbanisation; war and conquest; religion; ethics and law; and science. In all these cases, anticipation, prediction, and foresight; thinking and planning; visions of the good (or a better) future; memory and learning in the service of informed purposeful behavior; and goal setting were involved. (This is not to deny that animals possess memory and future consciousness, but these capacities are vastly more developed in humans.)

Since holistic future consciousness captures the distinctive capacity of the evolutionary, purposeful, and future-directional nature of the human mind, excellence within this fundamental set of abilities provides a way to define what is good within humans. Following a similar line of thought from Aristotle, what is good is realised through the excellence of functioning of the distinctive capacities of being human.

Moreover, flourishing in the flow of purposeful evolution is best served by heightening the capacities of holistic future consciousness, since holistic future consciousness is what makes possible and facilitates purposeful evolution. Flourishing in the flow of purposeful evolution is the good, and excellence in the capacities of holistic future consciousness maximises this process and consequently what is good.

A distinctive set of holistic character virtues provide standards of excellence for defining heightened future consciousness. Developing and exercising these virtues of heightened future consciousness best facilitates flourishing in purposeful evolution and realising the good future. The synthesis of these virtues is wisdom, conceived as a holistic, future-focused, evolutionary, and ethical capacity that maximises the good future both for ourselves and others.

Virtues can be defined as esteemed character traits which embody excellence and positive values across the varied aspects of human consciousness and behaviour. Moreover, following similar arguments in Aristotle, Confucius, Spinoza, and Seligman, virtues are personal accomplishments; they are realized through effort, practice, and achievement based on the belief in and aspiration and practice toward excellence.

The character virtues of heightened future consciousness include self-responsibility for the future; the pursuit of self-evolution or growth; the skill



and love of learning and thinking; hope, courage, and realistic optimism; and deep purpose, tenacity, and discipline. These virtues are examined in depth in the second half of my book with numerous personal and practical illustrations for their development and application to creating the good future.

### The self and the personal narrative

One key practical activity discussed in the second half of the book is the development of the self through personal and grand narratives of the future.

Humans have a strong disposition to make sense out of the world, as well as themselves, through narratives. The self creates and evolves itself as the coordinator of consciousness and life through an ongoing, future-directional, self-reflective storytelling process,

generating a relatively dynamic personal narrative of past and future, real and ideal. The self creates purpose, identity, and meaning in life through a personal narrative set within the context of a grand narrative it tells itself about the humanity, the world, and the universe. Transforming our life, consciousness, and self-identity involves transforming and evolving our ideal future personal narrative and our ideal future grand narrative, and pulling the two more clearly, strongly, and self-consciously together.

Consciously working on our personal and grand narratives of the future may be the most psychologically effective way to facilitate purposeful evolution and the growth of heightened future consciousness and wisdom. As a central exercise for the heightening of future consciousness and wisdom, we should articulate and re-write, where necessary, our ideal future personal narrative as a “wisdom narrative” that embraces the

development and exercise of the character virtues of heightened future consciousness in our future lives.

### Wisdom for the future

The book closes with a chapter on wisdom. I propose that through the synthesis of the character virtues of heightened future consciousness we realise wisdom, our most empowering means for purposefully evolving a good future.

Wisdom should be understood as a future-oriented, evolving, and holistic capacity of the human mind; further, it is a psychological, epistemic, and ethical ideal that continues to be pondered, researched, and refined. Building on the work of contemporary wisdom writers, as well as descriptions of wisdom throughout human history, both Eastern and Western, I propose the following evolving definition of wisdom:

*“Wisdom is the personally internalised, continually evolving understanding of and fascination with both the big picture and personal dimensions of life, and what is good, and the desire and creative capacity to apply this understanding to enhance (evolve) the well-being of life, both for oneself and others.”*

This definition highlights the holistic, practical, ethical, dynamic, and future-directional qualities of wisdom. As such, wisdom can be viewed as:

- The key to happiness, the good life, and flourishing. Contrary to materialistic, technological, economic, and even environmentalist theories, the good future is realised through a focused development of our psychological and ethical dimensions.
- The ideal of self-development. Wisdom is a psychologically holistic ideal—hence it is not skewed toward the rationalistic or cognitive—and has often been viewed as the pinnacle of mental health and conscious development.

- The central goal of education. Education should contribute to self-development, society, and the betterment of nature. Education should be holistic, ethical, practical, and future-focused, rather than piecemeal, value-neutral, irrelevant to life, and stuck in the past. Education should pursue excellence in our most distinctive and empowering capacity. Wisdom fits the bill for all of these ideals and goals.
- The preferable future evolution of the human conscious mind. Aside from being the appropriate ideal for our personal future development, the enhancement of wisdom provides a comprehensive and empowering ideal for future humanity and the ongoing evolution of consciousness. We should strive, for example, to be “wise cyborgs”. Further, at a collective level we should aspire toward an “Age of Wisdom” for society as a whole.

In the writing, teaching, and consultation on creating and implementing positive futures, it is essential to be a personal exemplar of wisdom; it is essential to walk the talk. Futurists should be wise people.

In conclusion, our ideal future personal narrative should be informed and inspired by an ideal narrative for the future of humanity. The ideal in both cases is the ongoing enhancement of wisdom. And in turn, our ideal future for humanity needs to be informed and inspired by our grand narrative of the evolutionary future of the cosmos. The story of the cosmos is the evolution of evolution and we are unique evolved expressions, personally and collectively, of this fundamental process within nature. An evolutionary grand narrative of the cosmos, involving our unique purposeful and participatory role within this saga, provides the most realistic, enlightening, ethical, and inspiring foundation for understanding and guiding ourselves and humanity as a whole.

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**Selected Recommended Publications of the Author.** Many of my articles and chapters of my books can be found on my website: <http://www.centerforfutureconsciousness.com/index.html>. Extensive supporting references for the arguments presented in this paper can be found in these articles and books.

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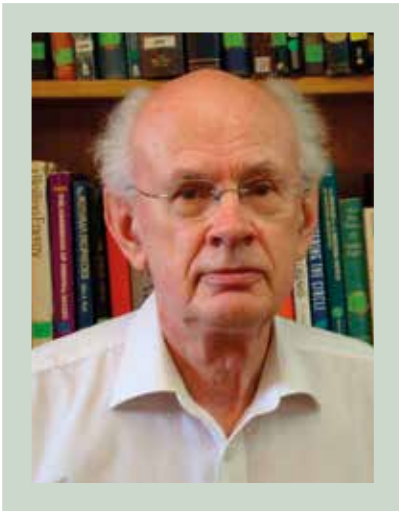
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*Nothing is enough for the man for whom enough is too little  
Not what we have, but what we enjoy, constitutes our abundance*  
Epicurus



# Early Philosopher- Presidents of the SPR



*John Poynton*

*It is notable that nine professional philosophers have been presidents of the Society for Psychological Research. They were required to give a presidential address to the Society, published in the SPR Proceedings. Reaching back to the beginnings of the Society, their addresses make important reading from many points of view, not least in grappling with the intellectual environment in which the philosophers found psychological research.*

The first presidential address is the well-known inaugural address of 1882 by Henry Sidgwick, Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge. [1] As noted in a recent study of Sidgwick by Alan Gauld, [2] his addresses provide a valuable insider's view. He gave nine addresses in all, published in full or as one abstract. They open a valuable window onto how the SPR was trying to take root in unsympathetic, even hostile soil, and provide an important base from which we can assess its progress.

## Formation of the Society for Psychological Research

In spite of the growth of materialism in the second half of the nineteenth century, a craze of spiritualism and table-tilting swept America and England. There was little serious study of it until 1874, when a group was formed to investigate these phenomena. It was organised by Sidgwick and Frederic Myers, a Cambridge scholar. The results were largely unconvincing, and Sidgwick became disillusioned.

Yet a professor of physics, William Barrett, conceived the idea of forming a group encompassing spiritualists, scientists and scholars to conduct experiments on spiritualistic and related phenomena. Sidgwick's past experience made him pessimistic about its success, but he agreed to become President of a new Society for Psychological Research, which was constituted in February 1882. Among the Society's 'Objects'[3] was 'to investigate that large body of *debatable* phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical and spiritualistic ...' Italics are mine; 'debatable' presumably reflected Sidgwick's and other's misgivings.

In the first presidential address he noted that the Society's prospectus 'has been received, either with entire cordiality, or with guarded neutrality, or with unconstructive contempt.' Yet, 'we are all agreed that the present state of things is a scandal to the enlightened age in which we live.' In dispute were 'marvellous phenomena,—of which it is quite impossible to exaggerate the scientific importance, if only a tenth part of what has been alleged by generally credible witnesses could be shown to be true...' On this positive note he declared, 'the primary aim of our Society ... is to make a sustained and systematic attempt to remove this scandal in one way or another.'

## Success and disfavour

An assessment of this attempt appeared in the second presidential address in December of the same year.[4] Despite the undertaking being 'still viewed with so much suspicion and disfavour by important sections of the educated world ... the existence of our Society is firmly established ...' The success 'has gone decidedly beyond my expectations.'

Like seventeenth-century 'wits' who derided the beginnings of research into psychological phenomena at that time, [5] Sidgwick spoke of 'unmitigated ridicule ... so totally, so ludicrously, ignorant of the facts from which they tried to extract jokes ... that it has been impossible to derive from their utterances anything but amusement—which was, no doubt, what they wished to furnish, though in a somewhat different way.' As to serious critics, 'I quite agree with them that very strong, very overwhelming, proof is

wanted to establish scientifically a fact of such tremendous importance as the transmission of ideas from mind to mind otherwise than by the recognised organs of sense...’ His solution was to pile fact upon fact. He touched on the problem of cognitive dissonance only briefly: ‘if only [critics] could conceive it possible that [our conclusions] could be established.’ Perhaps surprisingly he did not pursue this as a conceptual and philosophical hurdle.

Another criticism which he discussed was to turn out to be a fault-line within the Society: ‘if we had only confined ourselves to thought-reading, and, perhaps clairvoyance, and similar phenomena of the mesmeric trance, we might have had their countenance; but by taking in haunted houses, spirit-rapping, and so forth, we make ourselves too absurd.’ This developed into Spiritualist–non-Spiritualist antagonism that, a mere five years after the formation of the Society, saw many Spiritualists resign from the Council and even SPR membership, leading to open hostility, which has been damaging to psychical research.

Lastly in this address, he discussed the criticism levelled by ‘not a few religious persons’ that investigation into Spiritualism transgresses Biblical prohibitions. He regarded these criticisms as irrelevant, ‘when the question before us is whether certain phenomena are to be referred to the agency of Spirits at all, even as a “working hypothesis”.’

Sidgwick’s first term of office was from 1882 to 1884. By May 1884, public exposure was seen to lead to discussions ‘carried on in journals that are for the most part hostile to our endeavour.’ [6] The new-born SPR was already up against disparagement that we are familiar with; yet, while not engaging in ‘comments on the misrepresentations of fact or the blunders in logic which our opponents have committed; our aim, in my opinion, should rather be to consider whether we can learn anything from our critics—even from ignorant and prejudiced critics—which may assist us in the novel and difficult work in which we are engaged.’

The objection that physiology ‘would be overthrown’ if psi data were correct was met with the point that ‘No “working hypothesis” of physiological method would have to be abandoned. What would have to be given up would be merely the single negative conclusion that ideas and sensations could not be transmitted from one mind to another except in certain ways already known.’ Acceptance of telepathy ‘would be a mere enlargement, not in any sense an overthrow of existing physiology.’ This point has had to be made repeatedly since then.

The ‘scientific world’, he accepted, still required more data. He nevertheless complained, ‘I am obliged to add that none of our critics appear to me to appreciate the kind and degree of evidence that we have already obtained.’ Clearly he thought that at least some psi phenomena were no longer ‘debatable’, but established in fact as anything in science, both in terms of quality and quantity: the quality ‘is such that one or two items of it would be held to establish the occurrence, at any particular time and place, of any phenomenon whose existence was generally accepted.’

He noted the criticism that ‘we ought to get evidence that can be repeated at will.’ In reply he considered that ‘thought-transference’ ‘depends *prima facie* on the establishment of a certain relation between the nervous systems of the agent and percipient respectively; and as the conditions of this relation are specifically unknown, it is to be expected that they should be sometimes absent, sometimes present, in an inexplicable way; and, in particular, that this peculiar function of the brain should be easily disturbed by mental anxiety or discomfort of any kind.’ He gave no suggestions about how to achieve a psi-conducive state.

### Balfour Stewart and optimism

Sidgwick was elected president for a second term from 1888 to 1892. Slotted in-between was the presidency of Balfour Stewart, professor of ‘natural philosophy’ or physics at what became the University of Manchester. Elected to the Royal Society in 1862, he delivered two presidential addresses which should not be overlooked. [7] Following the publication of the huge collection of spontaneous cases, *Phantasms of the Living*, [8] Stewart was prepared to ‘conceive that the evidence for spontaneous telepathy is extremely strong—that it forms, perhaps, the strongest class of evidence that our Society has yet dealt with.’ He noted criticism that ‘we have not succeeded in formulating in precise language laws which might embrace the various facts that we have brought to light.’ Yet after the publication of *Phantasms*, ‘I cannot think that [this criticism] will be maintained by anyone who has read this work.’ He anticipated ‘at no distant period the full recognition of our labours by men of science in general.’

One could say that a sense of high optimism was now developing among our founders, even though Sidgwick, Myers and Edmund Gurney (lead author of *Phantasms*) had initially not been hopeful about the prospects of the Society when it was first proposed. The strength of evidence for telepathy was seen by Stewart

to raise the question ‘whether telepathy or some extension of it may account for the phenomena [of Spiritualism] without the necessity of resorting to the hypothesis of spiritual agency.’ To handle this early appearance of what is now debated as the ‘super-ESP hypothesis’, Stewart announced in his 1887 address a powerful president-led committee to investigate this complication and ‘the reality of such alleged Spiritualistic phenomena as may be brought before them,’ but regrettably he died later in the year.

### ‘Independence of soul or spirit’

The following year, 1888, Sidgwick gave his fifth presidential address. [9] His intention was ‘to survey briefly the course that our Society has travelled since its foundation in 1882.’ The historical importance of Spiritualism was noted: ‘when we took up seriously the obscure and perplexing investigation which we call *Psychical Research*, we were mainly moved to do so by the profound and painful division and conflict, as regards the nature and destiny of the human soul, which we found in the thought of our age.’ On the one hand, ‘the soul is conceived as independent of the bodily organism and destined to survive it. On the other hand, the preponderant tendency of modern physiology has been more and more to exclude this conception, and to treat the life and processes of any individual mind as inseparably connected with the life and processes of the shortlived body that it here animates.’

This ‘tendency of modern physiology’ is still preponderant. The SPR’s position was summarised as:

We believed unreservedly in the methods of modern science, and were prepared to accept submissively her reasoned conclusions, when sustained by the agreement of experts; but we were not prepared to bow with equal docility to the mere prejudices of scientific men. And it appeared to us that there was an important body of evidence—tending *prima facie* to establish the independence of soul or spirit—which modern science had simply left on one side with ignorant contempt; and that in so leaving it she had been untrue to her professed method, and had arrived prematurely at her negative conclusions.

He cautiously added that ‘these negative conclusions’ are not to be declared ‘scientifically erroneous’; ‘To have said that would have been to fall into the very error that we are trying to avoid. We only said that they had been arrived at prematurely, without due consideration of the recorded testimony of many



apparently “competent witnesses, past and present,”—to quote from our original statement of objects.’ So he continued,

Our point was not that we *were* scientific, but that we meant to be as scientific as we could. We meant to collect as systematically, carefully, and completely as possible evidence tending to throw light on the question of the action of mind either apart from the body or otherwise than through known bodily organs; ... and in particular we meant to examine with special care, in each department of enquiry, the action of the causes known to science that presented themselves as possible alternatives to our hypothesis:—since only a rigorous exclusion of such known causes could justify us in regarding as scientifically established the novel agency of mind acting or perceiving apart from the body, or otherwise than through the known organs of sense or muscular motion.

He regarded the ‘case for telepathy’ to be ‘the chief positive result of our six year’s work.’ In this experimental work, accepted evidence was ‘experiences in which the operation of such known [physical] causes appeared either impossible or highly improbable.’ But spontaneous cases were seen to present a ‘problem of exclusion of known causes’ which was fundamentally different. This meant dealing ‘with a problem in the theory of probabilities; ... we had to determine it entirely by our own statistical investigations, before proceeding to calculate our chances.’ This was recognised in the case of the *Phantasms of the Living*: ‘In the present state of the evidence, the question is one that requires a careful estimate of considerations difficult to determine with any exactness.’

He had hoped that *Phantasms* would prompt ‘a body of fresh first-hand evidence in every way superior in quality to most of what we have yet published.’ But this was not realised. Perhaps members were ‘under the impression that the business of collection in this department was considered to be completed ... and that if the sceptics are still unconvinced after the heap of cases laid before them, then there is no use offering them any more—for in fact they will simply not look at it.’

Nevertheless, if the conclusions of *Phantasms* could be accepted ‘by the younger and more open-minded part of the scientific world, we might fairly expect a rush of ardent investigators into the whole subject which will leave no department unexplored.’ While a ‘rush’ never materialised, no doubt he would have been cheered by the foreknowledge

that universities would eventually introduce the subject into their courses. May they not disappoint Sidgwick’s closing view that ‘we may at least hope for this consummation and work for it.’

In this address he deliberately left out his ‘view of the evidence for the psychical phenomena of Spiritualism.’ This was taken up in an address given in January, 1889. [10] He noted that his own view had ‘been importantly modified during the last six years; but the weightiest part of the reasons that induced me to undertake the investigation of them still remain weighty.’ The question of super-ESP versus spirit communication, contentious to this day, emerges here as it did with Stewart: ‘It is sometimes thought that those of us who declared in favour of telepathy thereby became hostile to the Spiritualistic hypothesis... But before we introduce in explanation of any phenomena, a cause unknown to science, we hold ourselves bound to try all that can be done in the way of explaining the phenomena by known causes; and as we regard telepathy as established, we are bound to treat it for this purpose like any other known cause.’

Also, deception on the part of the medium, conscious or unconscious, was seen to present virtually insurmountable research difficulties in the field ‘in which I personally take a strong interest.’ Gauld pointed out that ‘In considerable part at least it was motivated by moral and religious concerns.’

### ‘The canons of evidence’

‘Research difficulties’ were considered in a 1889 address headed ‘The Canons of Evidence in Psychical Research’. [11] While the title might suggest that confidence had been reached in handling evidence, in fact he dwelt on the intractability of evidence in psychical research. This still has lessons for us; his characterisation of the wayward nature of data garnered in psychical research could not be bettered: ‘evidence tending to prove the intrusion—if I may so call it—into the world of ordinary experience, material or mental, either of causes that find no place at all in science—i.e., in our systematised knowledge of the world of experience—or of unknown modes of operation of known causes.’

Waywardness of the data leads to ‘an immense divergence of opinion among thoughtful persons as to the manner in which this evidence should be dealt with...’ So, ‘It is not only that we are attacked with equal vigour by Materialists and Spiritualists: but that each of the opposing parties attributes to us an extreme and irrational bias in favour of the other extreme.’

His attitude seemed to be that we should take such divergence simply as being inevitable: ‘that there should be a very wide margin within which neither side can prove, or ought to try to prove, that the other is wrong: because the important considerations, the *pros* and *cons* that have to be weighed against each other, are not capable of being estimated with any exactness.’ He touched on the important effect, not often considered by him, of personal make-up and preconceptions; evidence is ‘taken at a different value by different persons, according to the different relations in which they stand to it.’

Therefore, ‘In considering whether the evidence for a marvellous fact is to be taken as true and adequate we have necessarily to compare opposing improbabilities: it is improbable that the marvel should have really happened, and it is improbable that the testimony to its happening should be false—otherwise the testimony would not be what we call evidence at all.’ The opposing improbabilities ‘are quite diverse, and we have no intellectual scales in which we can weigh them accurately one against the other.’

Anticipating the ‘exceptional claims require exceptional evidence’ dictum, he advocated ‘the rough scales of common-sense’. ‘The greater the marvel, the better must be the testimony; of that common-sense has no doubt; but it is impossible to say precisely what accumulation of testimony is required to balance a given magnitude of marvel.’ The trouble is that ‘common-sense’ tends to be over-ruled by ‘different value by different persons’.

He saw these difficulties principally to do with Spiritualism, in weighing probabilities of the reality of the phenomena against deficiency of testimony and of boggle threshold: ‘in many cases they must necessarily be estimated differently by different persons, according to their knowledge of the persons concerned.’ Therefore, ‘a part of my grounds for believing in telepathy, depending as it does, on personal knowledge, cannot be communicated except in weakened form to the ordinary reader of the printed statements which represent the evidence that has convinced me.’

Yet he did not wish to ‘leave the matter in this hazy condition,’ and felt he could give comfort: ‘considering the difficulties in which our investigation is involved, I think it unreasonable to complain of our slow rate of progress. I feel confident that if at the end of the next seven years we and our cause have made as much way as has been made in the seven that have

elapsed, the whole attitude of at least the progressive part of the scientific world, in relation to the subjects that we are studying, will have fundamentally changed.' Hardly so, unfortunately.

### Hallucinations

Sidgwick's last two addresses were progress reports on the great Census of Hallucinations, which was finally published in 1894. [12] The term 'hallucination', which implies illusion, was used because 'in every experience that we call Hallucination there is an element of erroneous belief.' Yet several experiences proved to be veridical or 'truth-telling', so how does this square with error?

The meaning Sidgwick gave 'hallucination' was 'a sensory effect which we cannot attribute to any

external physical cause of the kind that would ordinarily produce this effect.' [13] The absence of any *physical* cause is commonly taken to indicate illusion, but this is so only if a 'one-level naturalism' is assumed. I have criticised this assumption that all things, events and their causation can happen only at the level of a physical world [14]. A one-level assumption is being superseded in post-materialist science with the idea of 'the existence of other levels of reality that are non-physical.' [15] Following this many-level thinking, developed notably by Michael Whiteman, [16] an apparition need not be thought of as located in the observer's *physical* space at the moment; it may be considered as located in a non-physical space that the observer has entered in a slightly dissociated state. Seen in this light, there is no 'illusory belief', because there is true perception, albeit not in physical space.

This possibility meets the pseudo-problem of 'veridical hallucinations', a term which is self-contradictory. Physical space is mistakenly assumed, and the term 'hallucination' does not then apply.

Reading Sidgwick's and Stewart's assessment of the situation both within the SPR and surrounding it, one might say that little has fundamentally changed since the end of the nineteenth century. The development of quantum mechanics and consciousness studies may be seen as a beginning of fundamental change surrounding psychical research, but the difficulties recognised by Sidgwick and Stewart in the pursuit of psychical research itself largely remain. It speaks much for the perceptiveness of the first two presidents.

### Notes

- [1] Henry Sidgwick, 'Presidential Address', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1 ('July 1882', 1883) pp. 7- 12.
- [2] Alan Gauld, 'Henry Sidgwick, theism and psychical research', in Henry Sidgwick: *Happiness and Religion*, ed. Placido Bucolo, Roger Crisp & Bart Schultz. (Biancavilla: University of Catania, 2007) pp. 160-256.
- [3] The Society for Psychical Research, 'Objects of the Society', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1 ('July 1882', 1883) p. 3.
- [4] Henry Sidgwick, 'Address', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 1 ('December 1882', 1883) pp. 65-69.
- [5] John Poynton, 'Psychical research and the "scientific revolution"', *Paranormal Review*, 78 (Spring 2016), pp. 4-5.
- [6] Henry Sidgwick, 'Address', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 2 (May 1884) pp.152-156.
- [7] Balfour Stewart, 'Address'. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 3 (April 1885) pp.64-68. 'Address'. *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 4 (April 1887) pp. 262-267.
- [8] Edmund Gurney, Frederic Myers & Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living* (2 vols) (London: Trübner, 1886).
- [9] Henry Sidgwick, 'Address', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 5 ('July 1888', 1889) pp. 271-278.
- [10] Henry Sidgwick, 'Address', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6 (January 1889) pp. 399-402.
- [11] Henry Sidgwick, 'The canons of evidence in psychical research', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6 ('May 1889', 1890) pp.1-6.
- [12] 'Report on the Census of Hallucinations', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 10 (1894) pp. 25-422.
- [13] Henry Sidgwick. 'The census of hallucinations', *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 6 ('July 1889' 1890) pp. 7-12.
- [14] John Poynton, 'Out of Africa', *Paranormal Review*, 76 (Autumn 2015), pp. 4-5.
- [15] Mario Beauregard, Gary Schwartz and Lisa Miller, 'Manifesto for a post-materialist science', *Network Review* 115 (Summer 2014) pp. 4-5.
- [16] John Poynton, *Science, Mysticism and Psychical Research: The Revolutionary Synthesis of Michael Whiteman* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle upon Tyne, 2015).

*Reason shows me that if my happiness is desirable and good, the equal happiness of any other person must be equality desirable.*

Henry Sidgwick

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# Forests as Sanctuaries



Henryk Skolimowski

*Edited by Paul Kieniewicz*

*We all know how intricate the relationships are between trees and the life forms that surround them. But why are trees so important to human beings who are after all so different? Though distinctive and different, human beings are part of the same life heritage.*



The reason why trees and forests are so important to us, human beings, is connected with the natural geometry of the universe. We must therefore distinguish between geometry thought up by man, stemming from Euclidean geometry, that we learn at school, from natural geometry, in particular the geometry of living forms.

When Euclid discovered his geometry, which became the basis for man-made forms, Greek reason was already corrupted by Aristotle's approach to the world, of analysis and classification. The Greek world of Socrates and Plato still contained a unity and harmony. Since Aristotle, we start to divide and chop and atomise –put everything into separate compartments, giving them an identity with the help of special labels called definitions.

Euclid and his geometry only reinforces the tendency of separatism, thinking with the aid of logical categories. We start with axioms, then principles derived from axioms, finally theorems derived from axioms by accepted rules. Everything is precisely and rigorously defined. It's a triumph of the rational Western mind which emphasises the importance of formal reasoning, the importance of axioms, that then became the foundation for constructing the rest of the building. Let us pay particular attention to the emphasis that Euclid places on the point and the straight line. We know that we never see a point because it is as such, invisible. Similarly, in Nature we never find a straight line. Yet the architecture of the human world, or more precisely the architecture of the world constructed by modern man, is founded on straight lines and those invisible points.

Let us put the proposition in general terms: the geometry that dominates our lives, whether we live in a city, in a modern house, or when we drive

an automobile, is a geometry derived from an abstract system of a man-made geometry. It is a geometry which, after a while, constrains and suffocates us.

We have distinguished natural geometry from man-made geometry. But what is natural geometry? They are the forms by which and through which the universe and life has evolved. What are these forms? They are circular, spiral, round, womb-like. When we contemplate the architecture of the universe: the galaxies and atoms, amoebas and trees, then we immediately see that the dominant forms and shapes of nature and of the universe are round and spiral and so often amorphous.

The dancing universe does not move in straight lines. It moves in spiral, circular and irregular motions. The choreographer of dancing life in the universe is not the computer and its linear logic. The quintessential symbol of life is that of the womb.

All life has emerged from primordial womb which is irregular, amorphous, full of connecting loops and spirals. We, individual human beings, were conceived and formed in the wombs of our mothers. Natural geometry conditioned our early movements shaped our early development, formed our bodies which are ultimately an expression of this geometry. Now, look at your own body and see it in terms of natural geometry. It is full of irregular shapes – round, oval and asymmetrical. It's hard to find any straight line within the architecture of our body. The head is such a funny irregular egg. The hands and legs are irregular cylinders. The eyes and the mouth, the neck and the stomach are but endless variations on the theme of natural geometry.

Nurtured, conditioned and shaped by natural geometry, we respond to it in an intuitive and spontaneous manner.

Why do we rest so well in the presence of trees? Because being in their presence is for us a return to the primal geometry of life. That is why we feel so good in the act of communing with them. Being born and nourished by natural geometry we long to return to it. By dissolving ourselves into the geometry of a tree, we remove tensions and accumulated stresses thrust upon us by artificial geometry. The artificial geometry of man-made environments is full of tension and stress.

In returning to the forest, we return to the womb, not only in psychoanalytical terms but in cosmological terms. We are returning to the source of our origin. We are entering into communion with life at large. Forests provide for us a niche in which our communion with all life can happen.

The unstructured environment is necessary for our physical and mental health, as well as for those moments of quiet reflection, without which we cannot truly reach our deeper self. It should not be limited only to forests. Rugged mountains and wilderness areas provide the same nexus for being at one with the glory of elemental life forces. Wilderness areas are life-giving in a fundamental sense, nourishing the core of our being. This core of our being is sometimes called the soul.

To understand the nature of human existence is ultimately a metaphysical journey, at the very least a trans-physical one. In Greek, “metaphysical” actually means “trans-physical”. The metaphysical meaning of forests is based on the quality of space the forests provide for the tranquility of our souls. Those are spaces of silence, spaces of sanity, spaces of spiritual nourishment – within which our being is healed and at peace.

### Feeling the natural and the artificial

We all know how soul-destroying and destructive to our inner being modern cities can be. It's enough to compare a corner of unspoiled nature with that of a city dominated by technology to understand the metaphysical meaning of forests, of mountains, or of marshlands.

Though trees are immensely important to our psychic well-being, not every tree possesses the same energy and meaning. Manicured French parks and primordial Finnish forests have very different qualities. In manicured French parks, we witness the triumph of Cartesian logic and Euclidean geometry. In Finnish forests, immensely brooding and surrounded by irregularly shaped lakes, we witness the triumph of natural geometry.

What is natural and what is artificial is nowadays difficult to determine. However, when we find ourselves among the plastic interiors of an airport, with its cold brutal walls and lifeless plastic fixtures surrounding us – on the one hand, and within the bosom of a big forest, on the other hand, we know exactly the difference and without any ambiguity. In the forest our soul breathes, while in plastic environments our soul suffocates.

The idea that our soul breathes in a natural unstructured environment should not be treated as a poetic metaphor. It is a palpable truth. One recognises it on countless occasions, and in many contexts – although usually indirectly and semi-consciously.

We go to a lovely, old cottage. Our attention is drawn to old, wooden beams supporting the ceiling. It doesn't happen that way with some concrete and iron beams. We go to a modern flat, undistinguished otherwise except that there is a lovely wooden paneling along the walls of the rooms. We respond to it. We resonate with it. We do so not because we are old sentimental fools, or for aesthetic reasons alone, but for deeper and more fundamental reasons.

We breathe more freely when there are other life forms around us. Those old beams made of oak in the old cottage breathe as does the wooden paneling in the modern flat. Plastic interiors, concrete cubicles, those tower blocks, and rectilinear cities do not breathe. We find them ‘sterile,’ ‘repulsive,’ ‘depressing.’ These very adjectives come straight from the core of our being. And those are not just the reactions of some idiosyncratic individuals, but the reactions of at least a great majority of us.

A plastic interior may be pleasant in an aesthetic sense. Yet soon in our soul there awakens the feeling that it is uncomfortable, constraining and that in some way it cripples us. The primordial life in us responds quite unequivocally to our environment. We must learn to listen attentively to the beat of primordial life in us, whether we call it instinct, intuition, or a holistic response. We respond with great sensitivity to spaces, geometries and natural forms surrounding us. We respond positively to the forms which breathe life because they strengthen life. Life in us wants to be enhanced and nourished.

It is therefore very important to dwell in such a surrounding in which there are the forms that can breathe – wooden beams, the wooden floors, wooden paneling. Lucky are the nations that can build houses made of wood – inside and outside.

For wood breathes, changes and decays, as we do. It is also important to have flowers and plants in our living environment. For they breathe. To contemplate a flower for three seconds may be an important journey of solitude, a return to primal geometry – which is always renewing. We make these journeys actually rather often, whenever plants and flowers are in our surroundings. But we are rarely aware of it.

Forests and spirituality are intimately connected. Ancient people knew about this connection and cherished and cultivated it. Their spirit was nourished because their wisdom told them where the true sources of nourishment lie.

### Sacred forests in history

Ancient people lived closely with their environment. They wove themselves into the tapestry of life surrounding them so exquisitely that we can only admire their sensitivity and their wisdom. They had a very special understanding of places, the locus genius of their territory.

Forests were of course of great importance to ancient people, and everywhere in the world where trees grew, some forests were marked as particular spaces, indeed as sacred places. These forests had to be protected, and one could never desecrate them. In the seminal book of Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1935), we have impressive and eloquent evidence how people, from the Paleolithic era onwards preserved and cared for their forests; how they treated them as sacred. “In them no axe may be laid to any tree, no branch broken, no firewood gathered, no grass burnt; and animals which have taken refuge there may not be molested!”<sup>1</sup>

In the world of classical Greece, and then of Rome, these special groves and forests were usually enclosed by stone walls. This enclosure was called in Greek *Temenos*, an exclusive, demarcated place. A better translation would be ‘a sacred place.’ Indeed in the late 1970s, a periodical entitled *Temenos* started publication in England, explicitly evoking the spirit of *Temenos* – as a sacred enclosure, and calling for the creation of sacred spaces.

In Latin the term for these demarcated places was *templum*, the root of the word ‘temple.’ To begin with, those sacred enclosures were sanctuaries in which religious ceremonies took place. They were in fact temples under the open skies. When later on temples were erected as monumental buildings with columns and all, sacred groves and forests did not cease to exist.

They were still cherished and protected. They inspired a sense of awe, of the mystery of the universe, a higher state of in-dwelling, of being close to gods. The Roman philosopher Seneca in the first century A.D. writes,

*If you come upon a grove of old trees that have lifted their crowns up above and whose interlacing boughs have shut out the light of the sky, you feel that there is a spirit in the place; so lofty is the wood, so lonely the spot, so wondrous the thick unbroken shade<sup>2</sup>.*

That perception of the mystery of the universe evoked in a particular way in those special places, led ancient people to celebrate and protect them. They felt their life was enriched and deepened there. In sacred groves and forests, they felt close to the gods and other sublime forces of nature. This sense of the mystery of the universe has, by and large, been lost by modern Western man.

### The sense of the sacred

When we go to Delphi, on a crisp spring day, at the time when the hordes of tourists have not yet desecrated the place, and when in peace and tranquility we can merge with the spirit of the place, we feel a tremendous power emanating from the surroundings.

The sense of the sacred resides in us all. But it now requires very particular circumstances for it to manifest. Our jaded bodies, our overloaded senses and minds all make the journey of transcendence, to the core of our being, rather difficult.

For ancient people the sense of the sacred was enacted daily. The whole structure of their lives was so arranged, that not only could they experience the sacred, but were encouraged to do so. This is difficult to do in our times.

In the sacred groves and forests of ancient Greece, particular species of trees were dedicated to particular gods. Oaks belonged to Zeus, willows to Hera, olives to Athena, the laurel to Apollo, pines to Pan, the vine to Dionysius. But that attribution was not rigid. The ancient Greeks were generous and flexible people. In various localities, due to local traditions, the same trees could be dedicated to different deities. On the island of Lesbos, for instance there was an apple grove dedicated to Aphrodite.

Many sacred groves contained springs and streams and sometimes lakes. The pollution of these springs and lakes was absolutely forbidden. There was usually a total ban on fishing, except by priests. It was believed that whoever caught fish in Lake Poseidon would be turned into the fish called "the Fisher" (Pausanias, 3,21,5).

In Pellene there was a special sacred grove, dedicated to Artemis, which no one but priests could enter. But this was unusual. The common rule was that ordinary people could enter the grove providing they came ritually clean, meaning that they were not burdened by serious crimes, especially of spilled blood.<sup>3</sup>

The tradition of sacred groves and forests was maintained by ancient people throughout the world. Sacred groves in India are as ancient as the civilisation itself. Indeed, they go back to prehistoric, pre-agricultural times. While the idea and the existence of sacred forests and groves has not survived in the West – as we have progressively become a secular society – in India those groves have survived until recent times. However, with the weakening of the religious structure of beliefs, the very idea, and along with it, the very existence of sacred groves and forests has been undermined also in India. Yet there are still some sacred groves in India left, particularly among tribal people.<sup>4</sup>

One of my favourite definitions of the forest is that given by the Buddha. For him the forest is “a peculiar organism of unlimited kindness and benevolence that makes no demands for its sustenance and extends generously the products of its life activity; it affords protection to all beings, offering shade even to the axe man who destroys it.”

Native Americans or American Indians are particularly sensitive to the quality of places. To worship a mountain, a brook or a forest is for them quite a natural thing, for every plant, every tree as well as Mother Earth and Father Heaven are imbued with spirit.

In the cosmos infused with spiritual forces, delineating special places as particularly important and sacred was both natural as it was inevitable. These special places were also the places of ritual and ceremony, in which the sacred was enacted in daily life. In that act, the essential mystery, and divinity of the universe was affirmed.

In the Western world, churches and shrines served this purpose, of connecting man with the sacred. But that was some time ago. As we became progressively secularised so we lost the sense for the mystery of life and the sacredness of the universe. The churches are now hollow and reverberate with nothingness, for the spirit is gone from the people. Churches are being closed. In England alone two thousand of the existing sixteen thousand churches have been closed. It is reported that only three percent of the people regularly attend the Anglican church. The Bishop of Durham proclaimed: “England is no longer a Christian Country.” Is it not similar in other so called Christian countries?

The original temple, *templum* or *Temenos* lost its meaning, for our hearts have grown cold, and our minds have lost touch with what is mysterious and sacred. As we have

impoverished the universe of the sacred, so we have impoverished ourselves. As we have turned sacred groves and other forests into the timber industry, we no longer have natural temples in which we could renew ourselves.

## Towards a spiritual renewal

We are now reassessing the legacy of the entire technological civilisation and what it has done to our souls and our forests. Our question is no longer how to manage our forests and our lives more efficiently in the pursuit of further material progress. We must now ask more fundamental questions: How can we renew ourselves spiritually? What is the path to a life that is whole? How can we survive as humane and compassionate beings? How can we maintain our spiritual and cultural heritage?

Wilderness areas, which I call life-giving areas, are important for three reasons. Firstly, they are important as sanctuaries. Various life forms might not have survived without them. Secondly, they are important as givers of timber that breathes, from which we can make beautiful panels and beams that breathe life into our homes.

Thirdly, and most significantly, they are important as human sanctuaries, as places of spiritual, biological and psychological renewal. As the chariot of progress which is the demon of ecological destruction moves on, we wipe out more and more sanctuaries. They disappear under the axe of man, are polluted by plastic environments, or are turned into Disneylands.

We have lost the meaning of the *templum*, and so our churches are deserted. We have to recreate this meaning from the foundations. We have to reintroduce the sacred into the world for otherwise our existence will be sterile. We live in an un-enchanted world. We have to embark on the journey of the re-enchantment of the world. We have to recreate rituals and special ceremonies through which the highest aspects of life are expressed and celebrated.

Forests still inspire us and infuse us with the sense of awe and mystery, if we have the time and quietness of mind to lose ourselves in them. And here is an important message. Forests may again become sacred places where great rituals of life are performed, and where the celebration of the uniqueness and mystery of life and the

universe may take place. Making forests, places to reintroduce the sacred into the world, depends on our will. The first steps in this direction were taken by the famous Polish director, Jerzy Grotowski, who abandoned the theatre in order to make nature and particularly forests, the sacred grounds for man’s new communion with the cosmos.<sup>5</sup>

Let me finish with a short poem.

## Of Men and Forests

*Forests are the temples.*

*Trees are the altars.*

*We are the priests serving the forest gods.*

*We are also the priests serving the inner temple.*

*Treat yourself as if you were an inner temple*

*And you will come close*

*To the god which resides within.*

*To walk through the life as if you were*

*In one enormous temple,*

*This is the secret of grace.*

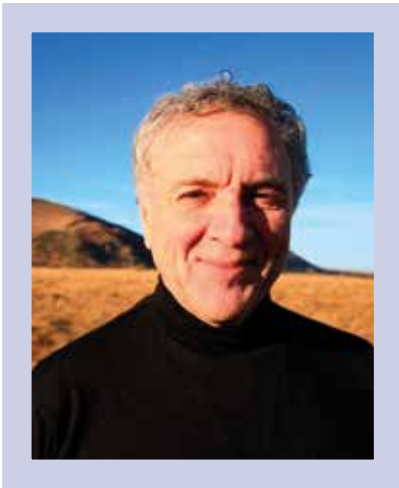
## Notes

1. Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Vol. 2, p. 42.
2. Seneca, *Epistles*, 4, 12, 3.
3. For further discussion see: J. Donald Hughes, “Sacred Groves: The Gods, Forest Protection, and Sustainable Yield in the Ancient World, in *Sustained Yield Forestry*, N.K. Steen, Ed., 1983.
4. For further discussion see: Madhav Gadgil and V.D. Vartak, “Sacred Groves in India - a Plea for Continued Conservation,” *The Journal of Bombay Natural History Society*, Vol. 72, No. 2, pp. 314-320, 1975.
5. See Jerzy Grotowski. *On the Road to Active Culture*, 1979; and his other writings.

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Henryk Skolimowski was born in Warsaw, 1930. He received his doctorate at Oxford University. Between 1964 and 1992 he taught at the University of Southern California, UCLA and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He is the author of 40 books and over 600 articles. Henryk sees the third millennium as the millennium of Light, human life as a unique form of existential sculpture accomplished through our will and creativity. He views the world as a sanctuary. Around this notion, he has woven the philosophical system called Eco-philosophy. He is an Honorary Member of the Network

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# Making (Sacred) Space for Staff Renewal and Transformation

*Rev Professor Stephen Wright*

*This is an edited version of a talk given recently at the joint SMN/BHMA conference on Transformative Innovations in Healthcare. It draws on and distils a lifetime of professional and spiritual practice.*

## Levels of identity

“Is there a God?” “Why is this happening to me?” “What do I do with my life?” – these are the everyday questions that surface in spiritual direction. A less common, but more important, question is: “Who asks the question?” Through deeper enquiry, we may begin to realise that who we think we are is not necessarily who we really are.

All spiritual traditions nudge us into questioning assumptions about what it is to be “me”. Our level of awareness of “me” determines the way we are in the world. Between the shores of the ego and the ocean of the soul there are many planes of consciousness.

Thus, if we are talking about changing the way healthcare is organised, then we must be clear not only about *what* needs to change but *who* it is that wants to change and why. Intention is all. Form follows consciousness. In the clarification of the motive through the “ground of our beseeching”, to paraphrase T S Eliot [1], we are more likely to produce wholesome changes if they have come from the wholesomeness of our Essence as opposed to, say, the product of our ego attachments and agendas. Inner awakening to a deeper truth of self must precede the forms we create.

All kinds of drives, conscious and unconscious, determine the form that emerges. In a culture where ‘we’ should be in charge, make things happen and succeed, surrender into other perceptions of self is anathema. I sat with my teacher Ram Dass, long ago and we explored these ideas, how the ego gets in the way, wants to ‘do’ everything. He offered, “I do nothing, and nothing is left undone” as a precept.

It took me years to ‘get’ that. When we act from the plane of ego consciousness we stamp our will, however benevolently intended, upon the world. Things we want to change are contaminated and corrupted by our desire to fix people and things according to our image. When ‘we’ let go of doing and serve ‘The Will’ not ‘our will’ the results are very different. A story here might be helpful.

## The dance of life

Maysie (not her real name) was close to death, 90, emaciated and terribly sad. The student nurse and I were helping her off the commode. Maysie put both her arms around my chest to steady herself while the nurse wiped her bottom. She said “Oh it’s years since I’ve had my arms around a man and a man’s arms around me.” I suddenly lurched into a memory of my mother, and how when I was a child we would go to the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool. I told her this, and how my Mum taught me to dance with her by having me stand on her feet and off we would waltz. Maysie said “I loved to dance, at the Tower too and do you remember Reginald Dixon on the organ?” And I said I did, and would she like to dance now and she said yes and the next thing you know I had pushed my feet beneath hers, gripped her gown behind her and waltzed through the screens out into the ward with me singing like a rusty Sinatra and Maysie humming along as I held onto her feather-light frame. We returned breathless to the bed, passing the ward manager who looked aghast. Maysie and I were laughing like kids. I placed her back in bed, brought her some roses from the garden. The gobsmacked student gasped, “Where did you learn to do that? It wasn’t in the module!”

Maysie died 3 days later, still smiling. It was of course nothing special, like any nurse, I have my tales to tell of those moments when the barriers fall away and we have the confidence rooted in wisdom and experience (and perhaps a certain fearlessness). Those moments when heart, mind, body and spirit conjoin the flow of caring so that healing happens.

In this little vignette the student and I had broken a lot of rules...the intimacy, the risk assessment process, flowers on the ward. It takes certain qualities to run those risks and hold patient care holistic...the freedom and courage that come with experience and possibly a little wisdom. In the trajectory from novice to expert, we acquire the connoisseurship, the nous, to be able safely to go with the flow of the healing stream, encouraging others to do likewise.

### Humanising the system

In risk-averse health services, technically rich yet spiritually impoverished, my colleagues and I work daily with practitioners in their struggle to humanise the system. For some the effort is costly, exhaustion leading to quitting, burnout or indifference – the consequences of which we saw recently at Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust or Winterbourne View and other regular reports of uncaring not to say cruel staff.

If we accept, as Martin [2] proposed in his seminal study *Hospitals in Trouble*, that uncaring psychopathic staff are rare and that most are ordinary people doing the best they can while lacking adequate education, leadership, resources and support. In such circumstances indifference is merely a defence mechanism in the face of overwhelming physical and emotional labour; burnout, the spiritual crisis that emerges when we just can't take it any more, is common [3]. An occupational therapist at our first Spirituality and Health conference (Durham, 1996) illuminates this point. She cried out, "How can I go back when my heart and soul are not welcome there?" Working in any dis-spiriting, dis-connected and dis-easing environments crushes the essence of what it is to be human.

Attention has more recently been paid in healthcare to developing leadership and staff support. These are all to the good, but sometimes these policies may be ways of staying in denial - that the roots of the problems of high levels of patient complaints, clinical errors and staff attrition rates lie simply in not having enough people and resources to do the job.

However, even when support and staffing are good, compassion and healing can still fall short, things still go awry. I have participated in six enquiries where care has failed. In one, a superbly equipped and staffed hospice, patients still experienced neglect and staff were bullied. All kinds of unconscious phenomena feed into relationships at work that are not governed by resources, not least as in this example, a failure to address the fear of death and dying among the care staff [5] leading to an inclination to be seduced by their own mythology. Reinforced by signals such as, "Oh how wonderful you are to be able to do this work, I couldn't," the delusion of martyred carers battling against the odds goes unchallenged, with dire consequences for patients and staff. Holistic care needs far more than the right resources to do the job.

A highly energised senior NHS executive I met thought "all this spiritual stuff" was "too touchy feely"; irrelevant to "getting the patients through the system". That last production-line phrase was telling. I replied, "But what the hell is health care if it's not touchy feely?" The conversation dried up. Five years later she asked to come into retreat after the NHS Trust that employed her sank into 'special measures'.

### The infiltration of modern individualism

Much of modern western health care has subtly and sometimes not so subtly bought into the values of neoliberalism. With its roots in Nietzschean "*ubermenschen*" and "*Gott is tot*" [4], 20<sup>th</sup> century eugenics and Darwinian survival of the fittest, this ideology has permeated almost every level of our culture and has rippled through the political discourse from the economics of Hayek and the ideologies of Ayn Rand and outwards into Thatcherism, Reaganism and, latterly, Trumpism. It is a fundamental denial of the truth that we are not just human beings but also human belongings. It feeds rampant individualism, colonises our values as irrefutable 'givens' and infects every part of our culture. It denies the truth that we are at our best when connected, collaborative and cooperative; living lives in community of shared responsibility.

This world-view has crept into the spiritual life. For example, in the past year I have worked with (or been a patient in!) 27 English and Scottish NHS trusts which have set up mindfulness programmes for staff, in an effort to reduce sickness, absenteeism, burnout and attrition.

Like motherhood and apple pie, building awareness, resilience and opening us up to greater compassion through mindfulness would seem self-evidently good. So, what's to complain about?

First of all, the implementation of some mindfulness programmes buys into the zeitgeist that 'it's all down to you' – that whatever is going wrong in society, personal life and work is the result of your own moral, biological, psychological or spiritual weaknesses that, with a bit of (mindful) work, you can put right. (If you can't, it's your fault). Thus, stressed people get asked, "What's wrong with you?" rather than, "What's wrong with the circumstances that have made you stressed?" Lonely people get asked, "Why can't you make friends" rather than "What's going on that has atomised neighbourliness?" Impoverished people get asked, "Why don't you get a job" rather than, "Why have so many jobs become insecure drudge paying shit wages?"

Responsibilities (and costs) of making sure the workplace or society is a healthy place to be get bypassed if we can dump the problem on individual failings. Many of the resilience building/mindfulness website and self-help tools are breaching in their lack of attention to the responsibilities of employers, governments and societies.

Despite the efforts to secularise it, can mindfulness really be divorced from its underlying Buddhist philosophy, not least what 'mind' is. Is a profound spiritual practice debased if reduced to a stress reduction technique? I was at a meeting some years ago with the Dalai Lama. He said, "Why do you all want to learn Buddhism, you have all you need already here?" The rich tradition of the contemplative way, for example, with the same attendant health benefits and cultivation of loving awareness is already here. The different philosophical roots of this tradition also hold the possibility that there is "Something Other" available to help us...we are not on our own [6].

The Buddha said, "Suffering is" and that its roots were attachment to things or to persons or to ideas of self. Another perspective is possible, that suffering occurs only on one plane of consciousness and that it may have meaning and purpose. Thus attachment may not be the issue, rather detachment from our Source, our deepest Self. Reconnection with this offers a different perspective and set of responses to the challenge of what it is to be human.

### Heartfulness

At the Sacred Space Foundation our approach rests on what we have called 'heartfulness' - an awakening to full awareness through inner exploration. It enables people to let go of trying to do compassion and simply learn to be it, for we carry its infinite source already



within the very heart of our being. Can it be possible that integrating deep spiritual practice, spirituality, into staff development and support programmes could assist the emergence of greater compassion? Could dismantling unhealthy and limiting constructs of self support more holistic care? Spiritual practices and insights do not have to be segregated to the meditation room, the retreat or the religious house. Despite scepticism that might be expected from hard-pressed NHS managers, some 25 have now asked us to bring our programmes to them.

Such personal transformation invariably requires processes such as inner enquiry over a long-term and deep shaking of the tectonic plates of the psyche in order to unleash the real “I Am” from the “I-that-I-think-I-am”. Such liberation is not about personal gratification, pacification or creating a saccharin, fluffy, feel-good existence. Rather, the intention is to nurture an interior realisation and full-fill-ment that liberates us into deeper engagement with life and work, but from a place of profound awareness of our true nature. An awareness that is not detached, disengaged, aloof witnessing of the human condition, but bursts with compassion for the healing of it and inspires a healthy-boundaried, non-attached willingness to participate. It is a call to leave the self and come Home to the Self, from which our path of service arises, awakening the heart to revolutionary compassionate action in the swampy lowlands of ordinary reality....in the words of the prophet [Micah 6:8] ...to “act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God”...whatever we experience the latter to be.

### The void within

This demands nothing less than transformation out of limited perceptions of self and the story of life as currently lived. It requires the writing of a new story where we are the hand and the pen and the paper. In the worlds of TS Eliot [1] – it requires “a condition of complete simplicity costing not less than everything”. This to many, perhaps most, is scary stuff. Little wonder we have lots of drugs to keep us away from it and addicted.

In the first week of November 2017, a police raid in Toronto netted 42kg of carfentanil. A powerful opioid, normally used to knock out elephants, but mixed with heroin delivers a knock-out but deadly ‘high’ for people. Half a world away, it was Single’s Day in China. The on-line shopping giant Alibaba saw over 160 billion Yuan (£20 billion) kerching through its tills in the biggest one-day shopping spree on the planet.

These events are connected. Sartre [7] wrote of the ‘God shaped hole’ in our consciousness – an empty space longing to be fulfilled with meaning, purpose and connection; the very stuff of spirituality and what it is to be human. For millennia and across cultures God/s quenched this spiritual thirst in various forms. In a life uprooted from what Tillich [8] called “the ground of being”, locked into ordinary reality without connection to “something other”, we seek other gods to fill the void, few of them healthy. Drink, drugs, TV, sex, shopping, power-grabbing, career chasing, status seeking... .. all these painkillers and more offer only temporary respite. Like the insatiable hungry ghosts of the Buddhist tradition with their bloated bodies and tiny mouths they demand more and more. All are ultimately destructive to ourselves and the earth.

The fear-full undercurrent lurking in us all as we touch that emptiness within, bereft of the numinous, makes us sick. It drives a relentless anxiety in the human condition that, for example, compromises our immune system. We’re more likely to develop one or more of a whole raft of illnesses from cardio-vascular disease to cancer [9].

### The 4 F’s

It’s no accident therefore that fear is diminished, and thus our health and happiness improved, when we have four other F’s in our lives. On all scales and from the big picture of much recent research, we are more likely to be happy and healthy if we have:-

*Faith* (not necessarily in a God, but simply having faith in something that gives meaning to life; For most people it is some perception of the divine, but it could equally be politics, philosophy or, for that matter, sport!)

*Fellowship* – family, friends, community – relationships that shelter us from loneliness. Loneliness has been shown to undermine health – although it may be not so much the loneliness *per se* as the underlying anxiety it provokes.

*Fulfilling Work* – bringing meaning, purpose, rewards to life.

*Free Giving* – volunteering, parenting, opportunities to help and express compassion without expectation of reward.

Our programme at Sacred Space, going back more than three decades, grew out of both the scientific and the spiritual truths of the consequences of disconnection from each other and ourselves. The early teachings we pursued in the healing arts extended to support for health care staff as we noticed that course participants sought more than skills in healing. They wanted, often desperately, healing for themselves. Out of that our ‘heartfulness’ ideas grew (see <https://youtu.be/YUMBKXjgEN0>).

### Inner work and the quality of relationships

Despite the reservations of the hard-pressed manager, inner work for individuals and achieving organisational goals are not mutually exclusive. The transformation of self-perception among carers can unleash benefits for the organisation – fewer staff problems and better responses from patients. Getting the relationships right in the first place seems to save money down the line with less staff sickness and fewer patient complaints, for example.

The focus of our work is twofold. Drawing on spiritual practices from the contemplative tradition, a lineage to which I am blessed to belong, we help individuals in our retreat facilities while also outreaching to groups in workplaces. The practices include spiritual direction, mentoring, deep silence, guided imagery, reflection, Enneagram insights, labyrinth walking, meditation and so on. When working with groups we use venues that are aesthetically pleasing, in nature, well away from the workplace, sometimes residential and lasting a week as well as short time out/retreat days. Isolation from mobile and wi-fi signals helps (the anxiety arising in some under such circumstance is itself full of rich teachings about attachment!)

Participants report many benefits, but often find it painful and frightening too. When we begin to engage with the dismantling of “who-I-think-I-am” to discover the “I Am”, that letting go of attachments to roles and identities can be confusing and hurtful. Confronting the essential emptiness of personality can take us to the edge of the abyss. “If I’m not this.” (doctor, nurse, mother, friend, sister, taxpayer.....) “Then who am I - nothing?” Contemplative practices help people from fear to liberation in “I Am.” – full stop, no accretions needed.

There is joy in the realisation that being nothing and no-thing are not the same.

I conclude with the story of Irene, a course participant and NHS support worker. She arrived armed with her multipacks of cola and stashes of chocolate and ciggys. Her bad education, crushed and angry persona, dysfunctional upbringing and home life was soon revealed and she spent the first part of the programme barely able to stay in the room. However, she stuck with it. In the final session everyone was speaking of their revelations of the impact of

dis-covering their I Amness. She exclaimed, “Well if you’re ‘I Am’ and I’m ‘I Am’, then we’re all the same aren’t we?” Recognising our mutual I-Amness is the stuff of connection and the fount of compassion in action.

That’s what we are called to do, as Forster [10] suggests, “only connect” - with the Essence of who we really are and through that connect with others and the All-that-is, whatever we experience that to be.

That is the truth that sets us free.  
It is where “human love will be seen at its height.”

This connection is not somewhere else.  
It is here. Now. Always.

In the *Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy cries, “I want to go home!” “But you *are* home, Dorothy”, replies the good witch, “All you have to do is wake up!”

[1]	Eliot T.S. 1944, <i>The Four Quartets</i> . Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. London.
[2]	Martin J. 1984, <i>Hospitals in Trouble</i> . Blackwell London.
[3]	Wright S. 2010, <i>Burnout –a spiritual crisis on the way home</i> . SSP. Penrith.
[4]	Nietzsche F. <i>trans.</i> Common T 2016 <i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i> . Createspace. London.
[5]	Speck P. 2003, Working with dying people in Obholzer A & Roberts V (eds.) <i>The Unconscious at Work</i> . Brunner-Routledge. London.
[6]	Wright S. 2017, <i>Coming Home</i> . SSP. Penrith.
[7]	Sartre J-P. <i>trans.</i> Eyre R 2003, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> . Routledge. London.
[8]	Tillich P. 2000, <i>The Courage to Be</i> . YUP. Yale.
[9]	Wright S. & Sayre-Adams J. 2008 <i>Sacred Space: right relationship and spirituality in healthcare</i> . SSP. Penrith.
[10]	Forster E. 2012, <i>Howards End</i> . Empire. London.



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# Shaping Influences

## Continental Meeting

Krakow, Poland

7th – 11th September 2017

*Eve Hicks*

*This year's Continental Meeting of the SMN marked the 25th anniversary of the first such meeting that was organised in Switzerland by Kevin Ashbridge, with Brendan and Janine Murray.*



Since then some 14 different countries have hosted this event, which over the years has become as much an experience as a conference. So it is a joy to be able to report that this year was no exception. Paul Kieniewicz and his wife Amber Poole generously invited participants to their home, Sichów House as the location for the event. Apart from being a stunning location, Sichów House and Library is an idyllic setting for the Continental Meeting as it is bursting with a history that has shaped the lives of so many. And was it because we knew much of that history is personally relevant to Paul that participants felt part of an adventure in discovery from the second he met us at Kraków airport. After quick introductions and an opportunity to park luggage in the bus, we were treated to an afternoon guided tour of Kraków in full sunlight. Then after a quick coffee and Polish cake stop we were taken by our private coach to Sichów House some 60 miles or so northeast of Kraków.

Built originally as a manor house and home to the Potocki and Radziwill families, Sichów House and Library is now run as a retreat and education centre. The welcome dinner on our first night set a high bar for quality catering in the Polish tradition that was maintained throughout our stay. And the catering staff even appeared happy when told the difficult diets they were expected to cater for!

Lectures picked up from topics arising in last year's Continental Meeting in Rome, and were focused around the main theme of Shaping Influences. **David Lorimer** opened the conference by lighting a candle and saying a few words in memory of **Tony Pritchett** who had recently suddenly died. A long-standing much-loved friend and devotee of the Scientific and Medical Network, Tony was scheduled to be part of the group and will be greatly missed.

As is usual for the SMN conferences, the programme included daily optional meditation or movement before a traditional breakfast and into the first session by 9.15. **Ruth Jones** gave the opening lecture on "Foreshoring". This was entirely new to most participants and it was explained that it was essentially an experiential session. Ruth explained the nature of working with our dreams in a collective and social manner, known as Social Dreaming. We were asked to be open in the way we shared our dreams past or present as they came to us and to engage in a free association. The task was to bring forward a collective consciousness with absolutely no references to egos. And it was also rather important that there would be no psychological or cognitive references. Rather than ask or answer specific questions, the idea and point of the exercise was to receive information from higher consciousness. Chairs were arranged around the available area broadly centred on the middle of the room in circles and we sat and shared dreams and associations as



they came to us. Dreams initially appeared random with dinosaurs, dogs, fire, breath of life, caves, light and darkness, all mentioned in the dreams we shared. But as the session progressed key themes emerged and we all agreed as Ruth drew the session together back into the ordinary that the themes coming forward were fear and trust, learning and healing, defence mechanisms and respect. To say we expanded the circle of world compassion may be an exaggeration, but I think we all agreed the relatively short session gave us a valuable insight into how Social Dreaming can be a shaping influence, in our case by developing a shared consciousness view of current tragic events around the world.

Paul Kieniewicz gave the next talk, titled "The Science of the Field" and this continued the shaping influence theme by putting science around what we understand by aura. It is known that life forms have a stable geometry, established soon after cell division and the two key questions being asked are firstly how do certain organisms know to regenerate specific organs, limbs etc and secondly, what is it that directs certain cells to begin the healing process. Early discoveries of how fields could be used to move material led researchers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to suggest that perhaps they were also responsible in some way for cell growth and development. Paul gave a detailed history of the research in this area leading to discussions on this biological field, now known as the Morphogenetic Field. Electromagnetism, sound, Electric/Electrodynamic are all considered possible candidates for explaining this field.

Paul then gave a detailed explanation of early 20<sup>th</sup> century pioneers in the area including Bose's work showing how slime moulds learn (now believed to be via electricity) and Gurvitch's work on mitogenetic radiation and bio-photons. More recently, Burr's work in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century measured the electromagnetic field and applied it both to salamander eggs and women's menstrual cycle and cancer diagnosis. He established that a change in the field always preceded physical growth. Unfortunately, however, the discovery of DNA made the area unfashionable until quite recently. 21<sup>st</sup> Century research is now picking up the theme and taking it onto the next stage. Zhao, for example looks at how electric fields around a wound direct molecules to the work so that healing and regeneration are promoted by the electric field. Examples were given of work on morphogenetic fields as applied to how a frog's eggs develop eyes, nose, mouth etc as well as applications for cancer treatment and regenerative biology.

In summary, Paul's talk demonstrated that all living entities have an associated

morphogenetic field that contains the pattern for the plant or animal. The healing process also involves the morphogenetic field, which can be mapped as a set of voltage differences. Taking the work into PSI and remote healing suggests that the field may act across large distances, either through interaction with the Earth's field (discussed later by John Kapp) or by a nonlocal agency (covered later by Phoebe Wyss).

The next two talks, by **Amber Poole** and **Natalie Tobert**, have strong supporting links as both investigate how our past influences our lives today. Amber was the first and her talk on "Hidden Histories" gave a robust phenomenological review of concealed connections between identical behaviours, personal traits and attitudes witnessed over successive centuries, even where whole generations have been wiped out as in the holocaust. Paul Kieniewicz's family was used as an example to illustrate the trans-generational repetitions. Going back as far as his great-great-grandfather Amber used photos, detailed personal knowledge and where possible written records to demonstrate how deaths, credits, personality traits and habits all repeated and survived. And it felt particularly appropriate to be hearing such qualitative evidence, so relevant to the central theme, in *Sichów House* where Paul's family have a personal history and pictures remain as supporting evidence. It was pointed out that Paul's family is just one example of many hundreds of families and that there are consequent influences on all those even remotely involved. Amber suggested that these influences have led towards excessive patriotism, nationalism and the passion for promoting Christianity seen in Poland today. Finally, reviewing the whole picture, Amber demonstrated how reviewing the past in the spirit of discovering the truth about what actually happened in order to gain a full understanding the observed patterns is an essential part for the mental health and well being of the individuals.

Heads were buzzing as we ate lunch before some of us set off to *Krzy topór Castle*, *Iwaniska* some 30 miles away. This early Baroque ruin is an impressive and indulgent 17<sup>th</sup> century fortress with some curious features appearing in the original building including cellars adorned with mirrors to house stallions and an enormous aquarium as a crystal ceiling above the great dining hall! After dinner, the evening was taken up with a musical entertainment of Polish ballads given by *Janusz Grzesz*, who had been trained in both music and theatre and sang many moving ballads.

**Natalie Tobert** opened lectures on the Saturday with a presentation that overlapped strongly with the need for

understanding patterns in recovery from mental health conditions. However, Natalie gave a wider and more general focus through richly detailed reports of various individuals, including herself, who had written about the means by which they came to uncover the traumas earlier generations had tried to deny and hide. There was a web of hidden towns revealing Pogroms decades before the Nazis. She then presented a list of all possible explanations of how the unsolicited memories could possibly be transmitted before moving on to consider the practical impact on our mental health. The verifiable data invites us to question the diagnostic labels of psychiatry, chemical imbalances and diseases of the brain. It was noted that we appear to be at a turning point with a profound change in psychiatry imminent. Increasingly questions are arising challenging the old methods used in the west to treat psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia and the importance of contextual experiences fully acknowledged. She then compared the silence of some specialists to poor communication within silos of academia and the outspoken assumptions of psychiatry. Drawing to a close, Natalie concluded by presenting her proposition that some people formally diagnosed with a mental health problem, may be involuntarily accessing their hidden histories, and trying to bring them into the present. It is time for a Cultural U-turn in institutional understanding of these matters.

**Phoebe Wyss'** talk came next under the heading "The Gods Within: Cosmic Archetypes from an Astrological Perspective" and turned back to a theme that had arisen earlier namely the influence of non-local agencies. Phoebe started by discussing the nested hierarchy of minds from the cosmic, galactic and solar minds into the family and our personal minds at the centre. She pointed out that although it is good for our egos to remember that our ideas come from the cosmos, that does not remove our individual responsibility, as we remain free being one part of the whole. And the more conscious we are, the more we are able to exercise our freedom. Science is now showing signs of attempting to integrate the different minds within the overall hierarchy by understanding them better and there were references to the whole subject by psychologists such as Jung and Hillman. Astrology as a discipline bridges the gap between the inner and outer minds. It is possible to explain and see synchronicity between astrological archetypes and world events.

Phoebe presented the zodiac matrix and briefly reviewed its geometry and levels of influence. The Virgo archetypal field was used to demonstrate personality traits as well as both levels and sources of

influence. She then looked at expressions of the Capricorn archetype and showed how our personal minds reflect the cosmic patterning that acts as a structure governing how we think of things. Richard Tarnas' 30-year study of correlations between the cyclic movements of the planets and events in human history matches historical events with astrological events and planetary cycles. Correlations were not linear but far more complex. Phoebe then looked at the current world situation referring to strong influences between 2008 and 2020 from Uranus (change) and Saturn (hardship and poverty). She closed by reminding us that nothing is predetermined and astrology is only probabilities and possibilities arising from influences of varying strengths. Breakdowns make space for the new and can become breakthroughs. At the end of the day, we are all co-creating together.

At this point, overwhelmed by the joy and warmth of the sun and the beauty of our surroundings, there was a collective desire expressed to move outside for our next talk given by **John Kapp**: "The Evidence for an A-field and Cosmic Internet". And so we reconvened outside to review and discuss the fundamental question addressed in this session, namely how the matter in living organisms is organised and controlled. John started with a full discussion around key definitions including a *field*, as a wave of energy vibrating at various frequencies such as sound, waves, gravity or brain waves and *diathetics* being the study of how matter is controlled. His null hypothesis was that consciousness is the primary ground of all being because each elemental particle has a charge and spin giving it an intrinsic relationship. The *A-field* is the outermost field or cosmic mind as discussed in Phoebe Wyss' talk above. Attention then turned to morphogenetic fields at the cellular level including DNA influences and morphic fields, which are more general and include behaviour and habit. John explained that the problem is that these A-field transmissions cannot be detected by any man made electrical measuring device, so its existence is generally rejected as superstition by mainstream science. Evidence suggests the A-field is the natural explanation of how psi effects work. John concluded by saying these matters should all now be accepted and formally studied as a branch of science, and not relegated to the supernatural realm.

The optional excursion after lunch was a trip to Sandomierz, a city with a history dating back to the Stone Age that still manages to maintain its medieval charm. Our after dinner treat for Saturday was a poetry and music evening in the tradition of salons throughout the great houses in Poland. Katherine Darton warmed us up by treating us to Bach's Partita in A minor on the flute. We then had poems short and



long and of all sorts. There was even had a Polish tongue twister that made us giggle!

**David Lorimer** took the first slot on the final day pulling together themes explored to date with an impressive summary of what various researchers have found on the many influences that currently shape both our individual and our collective identity. His lecture covered a wide and comprehensive volume of material from both individual and a shared perspective. David explained to us various researchers' conclusions on matters such as the range of different possible outcomes of the interesting times in which we live, views on the levels and ethics of shaping influence, cultural and gender metaphors. Gradually, our eyes were opened to the evolution of consciousness and degrees of human culture and we were reminded of a recurring central theme of the SMN.

For the final two lecture slots, **Piotr Skubala** and **Dr. Maciej Morlewski** turned away from what might be referred to as a macro vision covered so far and refocused our attention inwards into ourselves by considering a micro view. Under the title "Humans as Holobionts: our Relationship with Nature", Piotr Skubala gave us a fascinating presentation on the various bacteria and other microbes that colonise our bodies. Complete with detailed pictures and graphic eyebrow raising explanations, facts and numbers Piotr took us into a new world, totally invisible to our human eyes that existed within us all. We were shown that what we had previously thought of as innocent belly buttons and armpits are actually more like "rain forests" for bacteria. Looking at the body as a whole, all together, some 100 trillion microbial symbionts (the name given to human microbiota) live quietly around and inside us and endow us with crucial traits. It seems they are fundamental to nearly all aspects of our lives including our form, function, fitness, behaviour and even our sociability. Today, there is an unmistakable transformation happening in the way that

life is generally comprehended. Humans, animals and plants are no longer viewed as autonomous entities, but rather as "holobionts", composed of the host plus its symbiotic microbes.

The final lecture given by **Dr Maciej Morlewski** drew the conference to a close rather well. Drawing from his experiences in practicing medicine for over 30 years Maciej's talk: "Aspects of Life Conditions on Earth in Relation to Awareness of Mind, in the Light of Buddhist teachings" explained how our egos fill the gap in our earthly understanding of shaping influences. Maciej showed us how the world we inhabit is a kind of container designed for sentient beings including human beings. Although it allows for sensing, feeling and understanding reality, it also causes an ever-stronger bondage to habitual perceptions and reactions. The ego was the starting point for the individual's creation of a perception of the self as a separate person that strives to gain food, territorial rights and even unnecessary defence/attack situations. He finished with a happily optimistic bright conclusion namely the final reality of unlimited and unconditioned love and wisdom. Something we all felt personally by this stage.

Kurozweki Palace and Rytwiany Monastery were the locations for the final day's optional outing – the former with a close connection to Paul's mother's family. And the evening meal was an open fire BBQ and buffet salad. And the sun shone throughout our stay with barely any hint of wind or rain. I think we were all inspired and moved by this conference. Quite apart from the breadth, depth and relevance of all the lecture topics, the warm generosity of our hosts, and the beautiful location it was a delight as always to share experiences with members who all demonstrate a desire to truly listen as well as talk. In such ways are new ideas discovered. And long may the Continental Meeting continue. Here's to the next 25 years!



# Annual Gathering

## Widening the Evidence Base in Science and Spirituality

University of Plymouth, 7-9 July 2017

*David Lorimer*

*The 29<sup>th</sup> residential annual gathering took place at the University of Plymouth, where our Chairman Dr Paul Filmore has been lecturing for many years. We were able to enjoy its maritime location on the Saturday evening boat trip out into the Sound, going round as far as a fine Brunel bridge linking Devon and Cornwall and enjoying the spectacle of the rising full moon on the way back.*

This year our theme was *Widening the Evidence Base in Science and Spirituality* and we were lucky enough to have **John Hands** as our keynote speaker and author of the magisterial *CosmoSapiens*, winner of the 2016 Network Book Prize – see my review in No. 121, Summer 2016. John's first talk was entitled *Human Evolution from The Origin of the Universe: Evaluating the Evidence*. Here he asked the fundamental questions of who we are, where we come from and why we exist. His extensive and meticulous evaluation showed that in many cases theory is presented as fact. For example, Big Bang models are mathematical and based on an assumption of homogeneity, and the cosmological constant is used to square with the model. Here, John argued that there is a conflation of mathematical with scientific proof – dark energy and dark matter cannot be found. He concluded that it is in fact impossible for science to say where matter and energy come from and that many scientific theories are in fact systematic belief systems: 'Neither current nor competing models rationally explain how all the matter and energy of the universe burst into existence out of nothing.'

Moving on to the evolution of life on Earth, John contended that this represented a change of kind not just of degree. He maintained that there was no experimental support for the current orthodox hypothesis and that probability of self-replicating RNA emerging from random processes was  $10^{109}$  against. He pointed out that natural selection is in fact based on the destruction of variations rather than their evolution. Proponents now equate gradualist Neodarwinism with evolution itself but it is in fact another belief system unsupported by the latest empirical evidence; incidentally, crocodiles show no change in 200m years. Rather, it is collaboration that leads to the evolution of species (mutual survival and merging) and the really striking element is the growth of complexity – fusing and diverging - there is an underlying pattern in the evidence of cooperation and complexification.

We know that consciousness increases with complexification and centration, but our distinguishing feature is reflective consciousness, which has transformed existing abilities and generated new ones. Moreover, we are still evolving in terms of mind and culture. Here John distinguished three phases: primeval, philosophical, and scientific, which he illustrated with corresponding developmental charts. Philosophy moves beyond superstition by using reasoning and insight, while science emerges from natural philosophy and there is in fact a fascinating convergence between insights from physics and mysticism, as Capra, Wilber and others have shown. The period since the Second World War has seen an overall acceleration of



globalisation, convergent thinking and co-operation, despite recent setbacks – and the continuing dualistic tension between reflective thinking and deep-rooted instincts represented by cooperation v. competition, selflessness v. selfishness, compassion v. aggression.

This suggests that we humans are the unfinished product of an accelerating cosmic evolutionary process and the self-reflective agents of our future evolution.

John's second talk addressed *The Power and the Limitations of Science*. He quoted the view of Peter Atkins and others who have stated that the scientific method is the only means of discovering the nature of reality, asserting the 'omnicompetence of science' in its current form. He reviewed the standard scientific method before considering limitations both within the domain of science and also of the domain of science in answering such questions as what we are, where we came from, and why we exist. There are limitations to observation and measurement, limitations of data and limitations of mind-set in interpreting data through the lens of philosophical assumptions or presuppositions; interpretation is determined to a large degree by prior theory and the scientist's individual investment in that theory.

He argued that the reductionist method is a powerful but incomplete tool for arriving at explanations. It may offer a complete explanation for relatively simple, isolatable systems, but it is limited in its explanatory power for complex, open, interactive, and emergent systems: the interconnectivity of all phenomena requires a holistic explanation, hence scientists who use only the reductionist analytic method limit their explanatory ability if they fail to combine it with a holistic approach. Scientists working on energy have tended to dismiss the importance of the psychic energy of the mind and research fields associated with this. However, research has been accumulating in a number of areas, especially since the 1970s, and in his

view the scientific status of psychic energy is arguably more valid than the postulated dark energy.

John went on to look at various examples of defective science including suppression of alternative theories to by mainstream power. Returning to the philosophical status of Atkins' scientific materialism, John showed that the "No limitations of the domain of science" belief cannot itself be tested by systematic observation or repeatable experiment, hence the belief is false – or at least it is a philosophical rather than scientific proposition. He concluded by discussing the role of subjective experience, social concepts and values, untestable ideas and metaphysical questions, pointing out that science cannot explain why laws and fine tuning exist and that there may also be intrinsic limitations to the human mind. These were talks of immense scope and detail, and I would refer the interested reader to John's slides on the website as well as his book.

Medical anthropologist Dr Natalie Tobert spoke about *Cultural Ways of Knowing in Health and Spirituality*, based on her recent book *Spiritual Psychiatries*. It was very clear that symptoms are interpreted according to culture and corresponding ways of knowing and ideas of causation, especially with respect to mental illness. For example, her fieldwork showed that the Western biomedical model did not fit Indian beliefs. There are in fact competing narratives – and the western understanding is not universal. The same experience of distress can be classed as a mental health problem or not, according to different explanations. Natalie recommended that we drop the language of disorder, and noted that there was increasing openness within the Department of Health to new perspectives, an encouraging development, especially within the wider framework of wellbeing and the recognition that there may be a process of spiritual emergence at work that requires a broader and deeper approach. Her challenge to us was how to transform assumptions about mental health.

Richard Alabone spoke next about *DNA and the Psychic Blueprint*, drawing on the work of Sir Alister Hardy, who proposed that the architect of life was a "psychic blueprint - shared between members of a species...working alongside DNA" as a kind of archetype. Richard suggested that this idea was a promising avenue for incorporating the paranormal, as Hardy had done, and that telepathy was a copying of thought where microtubules acted as the carriers of information and DNA is not so much an architect of form as a pass code.

Dr Olly Robinson joined us by Skype with a talk on *Gero-Transcendence? The relation of spirituality and religious belief to age and gender in the UK, France and Germany*. He used data from the recent SMN Ipsos-MORI survey of technical, medical and scientific professionals in three countries that I also spoke about – see my article in the Spring *Network Review*. His starting point was two robust facts in the literature on spiritual and religious belief that they tend to show a higher prevalence in older adults relative to younger adults, and in women relative to men. He presented data that a higher percentage of women were religiously inclined and that religiosity does increase with age, though the clusters were more complex and Germany showed a different pattern, perhaps due to greater gender equality. He then considered various interpretations of these findings, including reductive explanations such as evolutionary advantages of belief, as well as Jungian and alchemical archetypal explanations.

Julie Soskin also offered a more experiential session - *A Sense of Knowing* – where we need a subtler personal appreciation to validate spiritual and psychic experiences that are mostly very personal to the individual. We need to understand more about the inner workings of the psyche and find ways to authenticate our feelings and trust our intuition.

Our speakers gave us various perspectives on our theme of widening the evidence base in science and spirituality. We need to understand not simply science itself but also its history in relation to social, cultural, psychological and philosophical factors. This helps us understand both its power and limitations, as John Hands indicated, but also the ways in which scientific thinking might evolve – and one of these ways is undoubtedly to widen the accepted evidence base. However, we also need new theoretical perspectives and a more sophisticated understanding of the interplay within ourselves of theory, evidence, presuppositions and reason.



John Hands with Janine Edge

# Correspondence

## Bohm and Krishnamurti

From: Peter Garrett, iam@petergarrett.com

*I very much enjoyed reading David Moody's article Why did Bohm collaborate with Krishnamurti? in your current edition of Paradigm Explorer 2017/2, along with your review of his book - both are well written, interesting and full of succinct but specific observations.*

I celebrate the work the two men did together. At a more personal level, I have some additional thoughts to add. These are not intended as a criticism of the article, but rather to fill out of the picture of the two men involved from my particular perspective. Although I did meet J Krishnamurti personally on one occasion, I did not have the opportunity to get to know him. My comments are mostly derived from my first-hand conversations with David and Saral Bohm, both of whom I knew well between 1984 and 1992 when David died and I was a pall bearer at his funeral. So these are not researched comments that I have read from others' writings, and they do offer some differences from the narrative in David's article.

In my storyline, J Krishnamurti was identified by the Theosophical Society as an 'avatar', meaning he had deliberately incarnated to save humanity; he was separated from his family in India, brought by ship to England and given a public school education to be equipped for that specific purpose; he renounced this bestowed role as a young man but never threw off the connotations; he had large numbers of followers of his teaching who (true to his teaching) claimed they were not followers; his teaching style was a large group one-on-one experience (where each person was invited to experience insights through one-on-one with him); David experienced some kind of spiritual enlightenment on first meeting him; J Krishnamurti did form (or significantly influence the formation of) at least one organisation, and at his invitation David was a Trustee of Brockwood Park School for many years, all copyrights on the joint recordings between him and David Bohm

were attributed solely to J Krishnamurti; he did not approve of David's involvement with Dialogue in the form that I developed with David (that sought collective intelligence through a group interaction, rather than a one-on-one format); he revealed jealousy by trying to persuade David to concentrate on just working with him; he had similarly actively discouraged the young Yehudi Menuhin from playing the violin, that he saw as a distraction from attending to J Krishnamurti's thinking; he sought a material change in the make-up of the brain as a necessary part of enlightenment; and he claimed nobody apart from he himself succeeded in achieving this.

On David's side, it is worth noting that he had a number of bouts of depression not just one; that he chose to stop working with J Krishnamurti in part because of J Krishnamurti's rejection of the new developments with Dialogue; that David withdrew from his Trusteeship of Brockwood Park School as he deepened his interest in working with Dialogue; and that during the many conversations I had with David I never heard him utter an unkind word about J Krishnamurti.

Peter Garrett

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*Peter arranged the weekend gathering in 1985 that led to the conception of Dialogue, published as the book *Unfolding Meaning - A Weekend of Dialogue with David Bohm*. During the subsequent 30 years he has introduced Dialogue into the widest range of settings to address commercial and social fragmentation. He is currently the Chair of the Academy of Professional Dialogue.*

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# Beyond the Holographic Model

From: Tim Houlding, t.houlding@btinternet.com

*It is exactly because of my enthusiasm to pursue the mystical and inexplicable aspects of our experience that I found Jude Currivan's talk at Mystics and Scientists so frustrating.*

Scientists revel in very reductionist models such as the Holographic Model because they make uncontemplatable complexity and subtlety much, much easier to handle mathematically and conceptually. However, I'm afraid there is no solace whatsoever for the mystic in the Holographic Model.

Erwin Schroedinger himself, who invented the Wave Equation named after him, became very frustrated with science's obsessive demand to separate the observer from the observed. His book *What is Life?* is a testimony to this. He was very prepared to embrace immense, probably transcendental, subtlety in his thinking.

The way I try and understand and explain the Quantum World is to invoke the idea of musical tones (vibration). Both the Schroedinger Wave Equation and Werner Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle share a mathematical correspondence with Fourier Harmonic Analysis, named after Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier, (1768-1830). This states that no single musical note, however pure, is just a pure note. Each pure note

extends an array of harmonics around it. To me, that is a very beautiful idea. It means that before we "collapse" that beautiful array into a defined and solid "thing", the prequel to that "thing" is spread out with immense possibilities. This is known as a "superposition"; I call it a "Superstance", as opposed to the collapsed, realised thing which we might call "Substance".

Our Universe can be viewed as a magnificent "Superstance". My take is that we have been conditioned by evolution to see the world through a very narrow perceptual window, which, most of the time, squeezes out the immense subtlety of this "Superstance" (quite like the Holographic Model) and we end up with apparently separated, unconnected "things", with we, as an observer, just another "thing".

Alfred North Whitehead's proposal is that ALL these subtleties of our Universe are occasions of primal "experience". He is emphatic about this and I quote: "Process is the becoming of experience..... finally the reformed subjectivist principle must

be repeated: apart from the experience of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness." (*Process and Reality*). This is a very profound statement from an eminent mathematician and logician!

Perhaps there are three great questions in science:

- 1) How did we get from vibration to solid things?
- 2) How did we get from solid things to living things?
- 3) How did we get from living things to conscious and self-conscious living things?

There is not a single scientist in the world who can give you a really smart answer to any of these questions. These are what I call the Three Great Turns of our (Uni)Verse when Nature transfigures itself in its irrepressibly creative advance into novelty (phrase borrowed from Whitehead). We have started the quest, but we are a very, very long way from any sort of coherent model. Science's technology is god-like, but its metaphysics is still in the Dark Ages!

## Paradigm Implorer

From: Tony Judge, anthony.judge@gmail.com

*As an enthusiast for neglected prefixes I thought a bit about the significance of Paradigm Implorer.*

You are the paradigm explorer par excellence, however it is my sense that many of those whose works you review are effectively paradigm implorers urgently seeking believers in their particular paradigm and its particular beauties. Of course this applies by extension to all of us and maybe to SMN.

That said, since I am fond of the universe as a metaphor, it is my impression that all the enlightened perspectives you review are somewhat like stars in our sky at night. More amusing however, with the expansion of the universe these are all speeding away from any observer. They ain't coming my way -- which is how I can see them!

More playfully, they are all aiming for a better and more positive place elsewhere -- even more distant from me (or us as observers). The (star) light we see is the flare of their rockets -- effectively pointed at us, as the negative place not to be, par excellence!

What fun! Hence the interest in the shape of the universe, its curvature, and the other conceptual indulgences of cosmologists. I like gravity as a mysterious analogue to arrogance exerting similar attractive power -- to the point of being the ultimate black hole offering entrance to a cognitive wormhole.

The specialist in comparative study of civilisations, Matthew Melko, made the point well:

### Hazards of System Building

(<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/guests/hazards.php>):

1. You identify with your system. It cost you blood to build it, and if it is attacked, it is your blood that is being shed.
2. You cannot tolerate tentativeness, suspension of judgment, or anything that does not fit the system.
3. You cannot apprehend anyone else's system unless it supports yours.

4. You believe that other systems are based on selected data.
5. Commitment to systems other than your own is fanaticism.
6. You come to believe that your system entitles you to proprietorship of the entities within it.
7. Since humour involves incongruity, and your system explains all seeming incongruities, you lose your sense of humour.
8. You lose you humility.
9. You accept all those points - insofar as they apply to builders of other systems.
10. So do I. (P.S. I hope I believe in the cult of fallibility)

Offered to participants at the Foundation for Integrative Education Conference, Oswego, New York, August 1969; reproduced in *Main Currents in Modern Thought*, vol. 26, no 2.

# Network News



## DR RUPERT SHELDRAKE BECOMES AN HONORARY MEMBER

The Board of the Scientific and Medical Network is pleased to announce that Rupert Sheldrake accepted the offer to be an honorary member. The announcement

was made recently by Network President **Dr Peter Fenwick** at the book launch of his recent publication, *Science and Spiritual Practices*, attended by a capacity audience of 400 people. Rupert is a biologist, author of ten books and over 80 refereed papers. He is a frequent lecturer at Network events, and joined the Network at the invitation of George Blaker in 1980, the year before the publication of his controversial first book, *A New Science of Life*. Over the past forty years he has developed the theory of morphic resonance. He has conducted many experiments, notably on human and animal telepathy, and more recently with his son Merlin on *Determinants of Faraday Wave-Patterns in Water Samples Oscillated Vertically at a Range of Frequencies from 50-200 Hz*, published in October in *Water Journal*. For more information and to sign up to his newsletter, visit his website, [www.sheldrake.org](http://www.sheldrake.org). For a full list of current honorary members, please visit our website.



## GERRI MCMANUS REJOINS SMN BOARD

We are pleased to welcome Gerri McManus back onto the SMN Board of Directors to focus on SMN Marketing. After graduating in Psychology, Gerri began working in Marketing and became a Chartered Marketer.

She later returned to university to gain a Masters in Psychotherapy and Counselling now practises as an integrative Psychotherapist, Counsellor and Clinical Supervisor in private practice. Gerri took over as Convenor of the Guildford Group in 2009, but over the last couple of years evening work commitments have made it difficult to host regular meetings. However, she is aiming to continue with Saturday lunchtime meetings in future. In the meantime, she is focusing on SMN Marketing including social media and increasing participation from younger people.



## DR CHIARA REGHELLIN AND LANA SACKWILD

From September 2017, Lana started to take on Chiara's duties and will be working in her stead from October 2017 until Chiara returns in April. Lana is currently studying for her Alef Trust MSc in Professional Development (Consciousness, Spirituality and Transpersonal Psychology) from Middlesex University. She is fluent in Japanese and has

worked for Mitsubishi Materials, MSH Health and Wellbeing and in Tokyo with Global Power and Gaba Corporation. Lana is now also helping with the website and social media.

In the meantime, we are delighted that Chiara's daughter Olympia arrived safely in early October.



## PROF THOMAS LOMBARDO WINS SMN BOOK PRIZE 2017

The SMN book prize is awarded to the most significant book published by a Member during the year. This year it goes to Prof Thomas Lombardo for his encyclopedic and optimistic book *Future Consciousness*. Readers will

find his article above and my review of his book below.

## OFFICE MOVE, ARCHIVE AND NETWORK REVIEW

The SMN office was moved to a different location within Colet House in December, and we are pleased that **Caroline Ford** has offered her services as Network Archivist to help us sort out and digitise where appropriate the content of 75 box files currently in a warehouse in Fife, Scotland as well as other material in London. It turns out that the archive of Network Review has some gaps, and in particular we are looking for a copy of numbers 108 and 113. Please let Lana know if you are able to help. [Lana@scimednet.org](mailto:Lana@scimednet.org)

## CONFERENCE RECORDINGS

Space has precluded printing a report from the recent Beyond the Brain conference, which will appear in the next issue. Video recordings were made at the event and are available via the website. This also applies to the Sheldrake book launch, and there are some audio recordings from Poland as well as from the annual meeting from John Hands.

## LOCAL GROUP REPORTS

### LONDON GROUP



**CLAUDIA NIELSEN –**  
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To read reports from other meetings, go to the REPORTS page of the London Group page of the Network's website. If you don't live in London but wish to be advised of London events, please drop me an email and I shall add your e-address to the circulation list.

#### ■ SEPTEMBER



This month we learned about *The Rule of St Benedict*, a 6<sup>th</sup> Century monk who wrote what became the most influential book since the Bible. LAURENCE FREEMAN was the speaker for this evening. A Benedictine monk, he is the Director of the World Community of Christian Meditation, Meditatio. This organisation teaches meditation in all walks of life, from schools to MBAs, from political offices to religious organisations and retreats.

We heard that Benedict was not a personality and very little is known about him, but his legacy is known to have influenced people, families, communities and organisations ever since. The power of this Rule (which is indeed a collection of rules, propositions and advice) is its practical and down to earth approach, dealing with the daily reality of real life, rather than being mystical and esoteric. To achieve the depth and insights of this text, one needs to read and re-read it over and over. The originator of this Rule was John Cassian, who brought the monastic tradition from the desert fathers of Egypt to France around the 5<sup>th</sup> Century and adapted it to the European culture. The principle of this monasticism was the experience of interiority to a transcendence of duality.

The Rule evokes this way of living with the clear objective of seeking God. Three promises are part of the Rule: obedience, stability and conversion. Obedience means not only obedience to the authority of the day (vertical), but also obedience to colleagues (horizontal) and above all, to the inner self. Obedience comes from the Latin word *oboedire* which means to listen and the concept is used in this sense. The second promise is stability by which is meant inner stability. This involves a commitment to the rhythm of life, which includes time to study (read) and time to work (to live by their labours). Conversion (the promise the Dalai Lama could most relate to) refers to the continuous process of change and transformation, the continuous process of detachment from achievements.

This Rule, Benedict says, is for beginners. The next step is ambiguous: it talks of continuous transformation and determines the person to be ready for solitude. The tension is between community and solitude. Laurence made the connection with meditation, which itself addresses the three promises of obedience = silence, stability = stillness, conversion = transformation. We had a 10-minute meditation with the mantra used by Laurence, *Maranatha*. Questions and discussion followed.

#### ■ OCTOBER

Prof THOMAS LOMBARDO came this month to talk about his ideas about future consciousness expressed in his new book *Future Consciousness – a Path to Purposeful Evolution*. Tom is the director of the *Center for Future Consciousness*, and Managing Editor of the online journal *Wisdom and the Future*. He is Prof Emeritus and retired Faculty Chair of Psychology, Philosophy and the Future at Rio Salado College, Tempe Arizona. He also holds posts in various future oriented organisations.

His ideas - that we as humans have an important role in shaping the future of our planet- are not original, but what is interesting are the perspectives he takes on our role and interaction towards this aim. He maintains that the question at the root of every consideration and decision is 'how do we create a good future?'. On a macro scale he reminds us that wars have been fought over this question, and on a personal ambit, we are constantly engaged with such a consideration, even when deciding what to cook for dinner. To consider the future of reality, we need to engage with the nature of reality, and here Tom explains that whatever the wider answers to this question are, reality has two characteristics: evolution and reciprocity. He explained those two elements in quite some detail, and showed us that we have an active role in evolution, and our insights, discoveries and developments have, over time, accelerated evolution.

By considering the impact of technology for instance, we see how we have changed the reality in which we live and how evolution has accelerated from 200, 2000, 2 million years ago. Significant events in evolution are happening faster and faster and becoming more and more complex. From this he reaches the surprising conclusion that 'playing God well is our purpose'. To guide ourselves, our future evolution is our mission as humans. Reciprocity is symbolised by the yin/yang concept of complementarity, an example is how life modifies the Earth and how the Earth modifies life. A good future then is achieved by what he calls 'flourishing' which he defines as the *flow of purposeful evolution*, and equates with personal happiness.

He criticises the ideas around sustainability, arguing that nothing can sustain itself, and trying to sustain is unnatural. We need to focus on moving forward, on the process of evolution. By *good*, in a *good future*, he means wise and this wisdom is achieved at a personal level by means of the development of some character virtues, amongst which are self-responsibility, self-evolution, the development of skills, learning and so on. Wisdom narratives in science fiction when well written expand our consciousness of possibilities of the future. It was a fascinating evening to which the limitations of this short piece is unable to do justice and I refer the reader to his book, available on Amazon.

#### ■ NOVEMBER

Prof STUART HAMEROFF was the speaker this evening, and he picked up the theme he had developed at the *Beyond the Brain* conference of the previous weekend with the title *The "quantum pleasure principle" – Did life evolve to feel good?* Stuart is Prof of Anaesthesiology and Psychology and is also the director of the *Center for Consciousness Studies* at the University of Arizona in Tucson. His interest in consciousness, how the brain creates it and how anaesthetics erase it, dates back to his years in medical school in the 1970s. Building on Prof Sir Roger Penrose's theory of Objective Reduction (OR), Stuart Hameroff and Penrose a theory which they called Orch OR (Orchestrated Objective Reduction) suggesting that consciousness derives from quantum vibrations in microtubules, vibrations which are connected to the fine-scale structure of the universe. This evening Stuart started by going back to the Big Bang and exploring when, what he called BING – the emergence of consciousness – happened. The question here is whether consciousness precedes life or whether life precedes consciousness, and he is aligned with the view that life emerged from consciousness.

But what is life? He went through the various theories which carry definitions of life. What can be asserted is that consciousness and feelings are essential elements of life. To the question of 'what is consciousness', he resorted to computer modelling and explained how messages are transmitted from neurons through the firing of dendrites and the chemical synapses. We heard a comparison with Artificial Intelligence and then the three waves of conscious perception and some interesting information on how anaesthetics work. Using the examples of the single cell Paramecium, Stuart explained the microtubules structures – basic to the Penrose-Hameroff theory - which are the same as those in neurones. These structures have an important role in memory, and their disintegration is present in Alzheimers.

He then moved into physics and explained the Copenhagen Interpretation, which dictates that consciousness causes the collapse of the wave function. The Penrose-Hameroff theory of Orch OR, which includes a quantum computational mechanism indicates the exact opposite, that the self-collapse of the wave function undergoing Orch OR *creates* consciousness. He theorises that in the primordial soup of the early universe, BING (conscious) moments were moments of pleasure and that this pleasure fed a fitness function and the creation of microtubules further optimising pleasure. His conclusions lead him to challenge Darwinian ideas that life evolved to promote behaviour for the survival of genes. Evolutionary Theory ignores consciousness, which is fundamental in his own theory, which is that behaviour, the fundamental impulse of evolution, is driven by (conscious) pleasure, in which he includes not only hedonism but also altruism, spirituality etc. This argument then leads to the assertion that life did indeed evolve to “feel good”!

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## KENT GROUP 2016

### YVONNE LOUIS

Rather belatedly, the following are the remaining reports on the meetings which took place in 2016. Due to various circumstances, there has been little activity within the Kent group during 2017. However, we are now looking to put together a new programme which will include more intimate informal discussion groups as well as ‘formal’ speaker events. One thing which I think is important is that attendees have the opportunity to reflect on the subject matter of the talks and have the opportunity to discuss with others in a subsequent informal meeting. This has been successful and will be incorporated into the new programme.

■ **22 July 2016 - Susan Michaelson “The Silver Road - Reflections on Art as a Healing Process”**

Some 25 members of the group were delighted to welcome Sue (she lives in Marrakesh and it was opportune that she was available to join our meeting this evening). Sue gave a very personal insight into her own journey, which she described as “a personal story within the context of a much bigger cultural story – a story about the evolution of consciousness and the voice of the feminine principle coming to the surface and trying to find a voice; an invitation to come into her world, the world of an artist trying to find her way in a contemporary context in order to create work that feels authentic and in which life, art and spiritual values are all interconnected.”

Sue has a lifelong connection with the world of the arts, images and image making, her connection with Transpersonal Psychology and the world of inner landscapes, her love of travel, and how these came together in the form of research that she felt compelled to do in order to make bridges between these worlds, which she completed in 2006. She talked about her research and described how once she started working with images in a sketchbook the whole project had lifted off and

taken her on a magical journey that was at the same time a literal, metaphorical, creative, intellectual, personal and emotive journey that was like flying on a magic carpet. She mentioned that during the course of her research she had been to several SMN conferences and these and particularly the presentations given by Anne Baring enabled her to place her work in a broad cultural context.

Sue then described how both her personal world and the world around has changed beyond recognition in the few years since she completed her research, but that the major themes which surfaced in the context of the research are perhaps more important than they were ten years ago. She referred to the cultural lack of balance between the masculine and feminine principles in much of the world in our life and times and the need for the feminine principle to find its voice. Sue talked about the magical nature of creating images and how images can take one on a journey that is both creative and healing if you follow them and let them lead the way. She stressed the need for awareness of the healing nature of creativity and a relationship between the feminine principle, shamanism, the visual arts and the healing process that goes back to our origins as human beings and the need for visual literacy, alongside our very refined capacity to use words in a world in which communications are becoming increasingly visual.

Sue’s thought-provoking talk was illustrated with examples of her own work, including her sketchbooks which we were free to look at during the concluding supper.

■ **16th September 2016 – Dr Oliver Robinson “More of a Feeling: Exploring the Nature of Spiritual Emotions”**

Our hosts for this superbly intense talk were local artists Bernard and Alison Allum, and the meeting took place in their studio. Olly stated that Spirituality has been defined by many as the pursuit of particular kinds of feeling and in his talk he presented a way of understanding spiritual emotions by categorising them into a set of five types and then explored what all five have in common. The five types are: positive, aesthetic, ecstatic, sublime and mystical. Positive emotions in spirituality pertain to the pursuit of happiness and overcoming suffering as central to the spiritual path. Aesthetic feelings relate to experiences of profound beauty and harmony and the feelings of spiritual profundity that these bring. Ecstatic feelings are exceptionally intense passionate experiences that are typically induced during trance states. Sublime feelings are those in which a sense of awe and numinous wonder brings a mixture of fear and trembling, allied to reverence and positive feeling. And mystical feelings are peaceful and unitive feelings of bliss and love.

Olly gave many examples to illustrate the different types, but proposed that spiritual development ideally involves cultivation of all of these types of feeling and their harmonious integration with thought.



This is the second occasion that Olly has been our guest speaker and as before he gave a concise and detailed presentation which was not only interesting but relevant in that we were prompted to consider our individual views on “spirituality”. There was much animated discussion over supper and in order to explore our personal views in more depth a small group met a week later for an informal discussion.



■ 12th October 2016 – Professor Richard Vane-Wright and Martin Redfern - “Sustainability”

Ever Since Paul Ehrlich’s dire warning of the population explosion and his advocacy of the Zero Population Growth Campaign, those in pursuit of the sustainability agenda have fought mostly a losing battle with conventional economic models based on an imperative of growth. Two things have to change if Sustainability and its necessary concomitant of steady-state-

economics is ever going to win the day: a major shift in public awareness based on the principles of Ecological Literacy; and a change in our language. Sustainability is not a protest as at present, but a fundamental and desirable ideology on which political decisions should be based. As has been said, ideologies compete over the control of political language as well as competing over plans for public policy. At its simplest, it is necessary to persuade people that care is more enjoyable than exploitation.

Dick’s talk considered how the language of Sustainability needs to change if it is to succeed and he also took a brief look at the indigenous North American “Four Societies Process” as a potential model for running a sustainable society.

It was a pleasure to welcome Dick who has attended most of our meetings since the group began, and spoken to us as well – always with enthusiasm and immensely supportive.

The next speaker was Martin Redfern who is well known to the SMN. His presentation “Antarctica Hotspot or Climate Change” is his personal record of the time he spent in Antarctica during 2008. Whilst Science Editor for the BBC World News, Martin spent a month in Antarctica following scientists of the British Antarctic Survey as they studied the ice rocks and wildlife on this amazing continent. They found that the ice is on the move and habitats are changing and parts are warming faster than anywhere else on the Earth. It was a privilege to see Martin’s slide presentation showing the magnificent and beautiful landscape and affecting too, as we realise that the world and Antarctica are changing.

Both talks complemented one another perfectly. Both highlighted the fact that human desires are causing irreversible damage to the world and landscape with uncertain consequences, and that we need to apply a model for Sustainability sooner rather than later.



■ 25th November 2016 – Ruth Jones “Energy Psychology”

A relatively new member to the group, Ruth is a psychotherapist and has worked with adults, children and families for over 20 years in both public and private sectors. She initially trained as an art therapist. She shared her understanding of the ways in which Energy Psychology methods are completing the spectrum of psychological techniques so that therapy can at last address all registers of our experience; our interconnected consciousness and unconscious minds, our bodies and our energetic and spiritual dimensions. Ruth shared the very latest scientific underpinnings of this new paradigm, including from the world of quantum physics while relating these methods to their roots in some of the most ancient healing traditions known to man.

A century ago, Freud spent his life and career exploring what it means to be human. Extending beyond the Cartesian dictum “I think therefore I am” he developed the “talking cure” to start to make sense of the human mind and understand what drives human beings to behave as they do, socially, culturally and impulsively. A man of his time, he anticipated future fields of enquiry that were simply beyond the science of his day.

We are living through a time of global paradigm shift, geopolitically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. All institutions which provided a sense of order and cohesion in the 20th century, and easy assumptions about national boundaries, economics of growth and credit, the environment, antibiotics, inter alia are being challenged by globalisation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (technology). This confronts us as never before with questions about what it means to be human and what life is for.

This climate heralds the need for an expanding psychology to help people to find meaning and purpose in their lives. What does it mean to be mentally ill? What is depression, anxiety and PTSD, and how can these human experiences be relieved effectively, gently and without side effects? The quickly evolving family of Energy Psychology methods is responding to these new parameters.

This was an interactive session with questions and observations from the audience prompting much discussion, which continued through to the end of the evening. Subsequently some of the group met a week later in order to explore some of the issues raised in more depth.

## CAMBRIDGE GROUP - RICHARD MICHELL

At our November 9 meeting, we took up Tim Houlding’s suggestion to invite deep fundamental questions from the floor, “not necessarily to obtain answers but rather to enjoy, with humility, loving imagination, integrity and competence, the deep searches of our fellow travellers”. Accordingly, we considered an apparently simple question which has become somewhat enigmatic in our post-religious culture, namely: what do we understand by the term “spirit”? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the answers produced were diverse but did lead to a stimulating and open-ended discussion much appreciated by everyone present. Ultimately, reality appears to be far more mysterious than we can imagine, and neither science nor religion seem very good at clarifying that mystery.

## WEST SUSSEX

The West Hampshire Group has been discontinued but the organisers suggest that local members consult the Bosham-based Hamblin Trust website as they have an interesting programme of events and welcome contributions with a scientific, medical or spiritual content. There is a main hall, library and smaller meeting rooms, as well as self-catering lodges on site – see [www.thehamblinvision.org.uk](http://www.thehamblinvision.org.uk)

## MEMBERS' ARTICLES AND ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Available from the editor or through links – dl@scimednet.org

### SCIENCE

- Determinants of Faraday Wave-Patterns in Water Samples Oscillated Vertically at a Range of Frequencies from 50-200 Hz  
*Merlin Sheldrake and Rupert Sheldrake (27 pp. from Water Journal - <https://www.sheldrake.org/files/pdfs/papers/WATER.2017.10.Sheldrake.pdf>)*
- Quantum Gravity and Taoist Cosmology: Exploring the ancient origins of phenomenological string theory  
*Steven M. Rosen (27 pp from Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology)*
- Rumbling the Replicator  
*Brian Goodwin (article reprinted in Beshara 4 from Network Newsletter Summer 1988)*
- Re-Thinking Biology—I. Maxwell's Demon and the Spontaneous Origin of Life  
*Christopher Busby, Charles Vyvyan Howard (12 pp., from Advances in Biochemistry 2017)*
- Artificial Intelligence, Human Intelligence and Intelligence of Nature: Difficult Questions in their Ambitious Fusion  
*AK Mukhopadhyay MD (16 pp. from Current Opinions in Neurological Science Volume 1 Issue 5 2017)*
- Obituaries of Margaret Colquhoun – some members may know of Margaret's work on Goethean science.

### MEDICINE-HEALTH

- Fear, Pain, Denial and Spiritual Experiences in Dying Processes  
*Monika Renz et al (14 pp., from American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine)*
- Will the Meikirch Model, a New Framework for Health, Induce a Paradigm Shift in Healthcare?  
*Johannes Bircher, Eckhart G. Hahn. (15 pp.)*
- New Findings Show Avoiding GMOs Improves Health  
*Jeffrey Smith (6 pp. summarising an important scientific paper)*

### PHILOSOPHY-RELIGION

- Humanity's Journey Home: Learning to live in a living Universe1  
© Duane Elgin, June 29, 2017 (15 pp.)
- A Return to Being Human  
*Hardin Tibbs (16 pp.)*
- Concerning the Spiritual in Twentieth- Century Art and Science  
*Mike King (24 pp.)*
- A Possible Scientific Framework for Spiritual Belief and Practice  
*Elizabeth Grigg (4 pp.)*

### PSYCHOLOGY-CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

- The Cambridge Declaration on Consciousness, 2012 (2 pp.)
- Through the White – A Journey from Death to Rebirth  
*Rolf Ulrich Kramer (2 pp.)*
- Out-of-Body Experience: Review & a Case Study  
*Julia Sellers (23 pp. from Journal of Consciousness Exploration & Research)*

### GENERAL

- Leading Across the Threshold  
*Giles Hutchins (7 pp.)*

## ONLINE ARTICLES FROM ANTHONY JUDGE

- Cognitive Implications in 3D of Triadic Symbols Valued in 2D Representations of the triskelion in virtual reality and implications for quantum consciousness  
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/triskele.php>
- Framing Cyclic Revolutionary Emergence of Opposing Symbols of Identity  
*Eppur si muove: Biomimetic embedding of N-tuple helices in spherical polyhedra*  
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/helipoly.php>
- Cognitive Osmosis in a Knowledge-based Civilization Interface challenge of inside-outside, insight-outsight, information-outformation  
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/cognosmo.php>
- Beyond Fire and Fury: Trump as American as Apple Pie? Maybe time to appreciate the dish  
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/musings/applepie.php>

## NOTICES

### TODI-WEEK JUNE 23-30, 2018 - AN ECOLOGICAL MIND AND MATTER A Unique Opportunity for Young People!

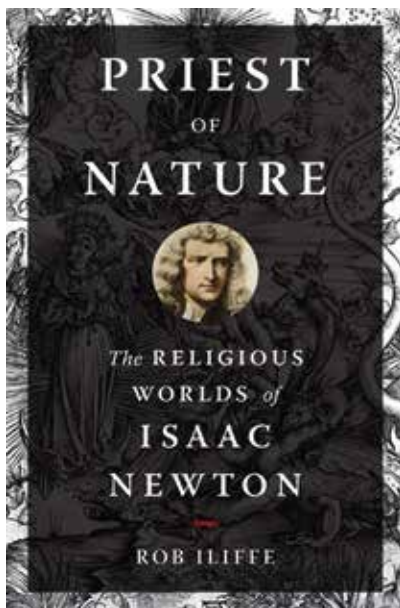
The Todi-week is an interdisciplinary residential week where students and young managers and people interested in holistic thinking from all over the world and from all disciplines, are “mixed” with critical scientists, spiritual leaders, artists, musicians, poets, policy-makers, professionals in medicine and psychology: in the old tradition of the Cortona-week, science and the wholeness of life.... The aim, with the help of world known professionals and even visionaries like Fritjof Capra, David Steindl-Rast, Joan Halifax and Stuart Kauffman is to open up the horizon of the participants to the values of ecology, ethics, tolerance, internal introspection- and to the actual new frontiers of science, literature, art, economy – the full display of human experience – where life becomes a system view of interacting parts – and not an addition of single isolated domains. We work together in round table discussions, lectures and – very important - with experiential workshops, where the participants can paint, do sculpture or music, meditation, theatre... choosing by themselves which aspects of life are to be discovered or revisited for their own life equilibrium. Speakers include and your editor. Full board and fee registration 1500 euro. Limited attendance (max 100 people) – partial attendance not permitted. See for details [www.cortonafriends.org](http://www.cortonafriends.org) I was in Cortona in 1997 and look forward to being in Todi in 2018 – please pass on to all your young contacts!

### THE WORLD NEEDS DIALOGUE! OCTOBER 15-17 2018

*The World Needs Dialogue!* the first annual conference of the Academy of Professional Dialogue will be held at Roffey Park in the UK. The purpose is to develop deeper understanding of Professional Dialogue, a theory and practice originating in Dialogues with David Bohm in the 1980s. The emphasis at the conference will be talking and thinking together in Dialogue, rather than traditional presentations. People are invited to submit an Expression of Interest for their work to be considered at the conference or Apply to Attend the conference through the Academy website [aofpd.org](http://aofpd.org).

# book reviews

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## SCIENCE-PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

### THE ESOTERIC NEWTON

Edi Bilimoria

#### ■ PRIEST OF NATURE

Rob Iliffe

Oxford, 2017, 522 pp., £22.99, h/b – ISBN 978-0-19-999535-6

‘The ancient religion, which enjoined the study of the heavens as a truly religious endeavour, was thus restored to some extent in the Principia’s revelation of the divine [not mechanistic] blueprint for the world. The perfection of the understanding involved the relentless study of sacred texts and the rational examination of the cosmos.’

‘Oh! He wasted an awful lot of time on it: clearly though, he wasn’t stupid.’ This was how a celebrated Oxbridge professor of divinity brushed aside an innocuous question put to him at a prestigious SMN conference about the import of Newton’s writings on theology and prophecy. Perhaps the learned professor was merely amusing himself by paraphrasing the remarks of the Woolthorpe Manor (Newton’s ancestral home) servants who called the young Isaac ‘a silly boy [who] w<sup>d</sup> never be good for anything’. Or perhaps not: instead, that he was continuing in the long line of scholarly presumption rife since the Age of Enlightenment about underestimating the extent and complexity of Newton’s religious writings regarded as being of little consequence compared to his monumental expositions in natural philosophy. That it has taken nearly three weary centuries to grind to death such prejudice is thanks to the pioneering work of scholars like Frank Manuel and now in full measure to Rob Iliffe’s *Priest of Nature* on the religious thoughts, vast theological writings and spiritual views of the man born on 25<sup>th</sup> December 1642 – England’s finest Christmas present to the world.

Rob Iliffe is Professor of History at the University of Oxford and General Editor of the online Newton Project whose

objective is to produce a comprehensive edition of all of Newton’s printed and unpublished writings, which includes an immense number of foundational documents in Western and indeed global intellectual history published in full, with accompanying images of the originals, for the first time. This magnanimous endeavour has been massively aided by digital technology, which has enabled researchers to accomplish in hours what would have taken laborious years sifting through microfilms a few decades ago. This is especially relevant to Newton’s largely unpublished ‘non-scientific’ papers auctioned at the Sotheby sale of 1936 including, what is crucial to this book, the several million words of religious, political and historical writings in the collection of the biblical scholar Abraham Yahuda languishing (until now) in the National Library of Israel.

Assisted by other historians and scholarly biographers on whose collective shoulders Rob Iliffe has stood, as he magnanimously admits in the Acknowledgements, his magisterial book gives several more turns to the wheel of Newtonian scholarship. In particular, his book has finally demolished the following three interrelated preconceptions about Newton’s religious views and writings: (a) that all intellectual energy and passion having been exhausted over the creation of his works in mathematical physics and optics, Newton’s alchemical and religious scribbles were the dotage of old age after he moved to London in 1696 and became senile, perhaps even unhinged; (b) that Newton resorted to God when mechanical laws were found to be lacking (the so-called ‘God of the gaps’ argument); (c) that the universe was a clockwork machine set in motion by God who then stood apart from his creation, other than occasional, capricious tinkering with the orbits of the planets and hence in the laws of nature.

Why does Iliffe refer to Newton as a priest of nature? Because, outside of religion, natural philosophy was the most important way of grasping the nature of God and Newton’s work in this field had a direct bearing on scriptural exegesis that in due course might be a key resource in the

narrative about cosmogenesis. This fact, plus of course, the massive research and writing on religion itself is demonstrated, profusely referenced and seamlessly woven into the book. Taking into account the complex, multi-layered and highly organic nature of the subject, his style is extremely lucid, without any orotundity, and the argument developed with an inexorableness rather like the unfolding of a Bach fugue (Bach, the Apostle and Law Giver of Music, incidentally, a European contemporary of the Priest of Nature). And like a fugue, there is a principal theme running through the entire work: the manner in which divinity pervaded Newton's thoughts and constituted the backbone of his entire life – resulting in his desire to lead an intensely virtuous and godly life, his deadly serious attitude to religion along with a detestation of corrupting influences, and a belief in a future millennium. That being the case it would be more realistic in this review to cherry-pick highlights uniquely presented than to delve into details.

There are extensive accounts of the college syllabus, quality of instruction (underrated by previous biographers), regimen and discipline that not only make fascinating reading in themselves, but provide valuable insights into the intellectual influences, and especially the religious immersion and phenomenal work ethic that profoundly shaped the youthful Newton's mental world and his religiosity. Students were given a manual of 'Rules' set out by James Duport, an influential preacher and Trinity tutor. They were *obliged* to rise at 4:30 A.M. and resort to private prayer before chapel at 5:30 (6 A.M. when Newton arrived) being 'wholly intent upon y<sup>e</sup> ordinance at hand'; then followed breakfast during which Scripture was expounded, followed by study and review of logic, mathematics, Latin and philosophy, lectures or disputations at 7 or 8 A.M., with lunch at noon. (Unfortunately we don't know if Newton's legendary absent-mindedness was such that he had to ask someone which way he was walking along Trinity Street in order to decide if he had had his lunch.) Afternoon was devoted to disputations, with evening chapel at 5 P.M. and supper in the hall at 6 P.M., after which students would retire to discuss religious or secular topics with their tutors, retiring to bed at 10 P.M. latest, there being a time to work and a time to sleep as Duport cautioned his charge. Would that such discipline were followed nowadays, let alone the stern warning issued about constantly being on guard against wasting time 'the greatest loss in the world', idleness, 'evil companie', neglect of studies, indulging in alcohol or tobacco and not adhering to the religiously informed life. Walking often, and alone in the fields was recommended to imbibe good thoughts and engender self-communion, whilst scholarly labour in itself was emphasized as a spiritual

activity because 'you must be like spirituall ants, gathering and laying up food for your soules'. As if that were not enough, Newton's tutor, Lucasian Professor Isaac Barrow encouraged students to work to their utmost, sloth being the 'nursery of sins', the idle drone nothing more than 'an unnatural excrescence, sucking nutriment' from the common weal, and wisdom requiring painstaking labour because truth 'doth not commonly lie in the surface ... but is lodged deep in the bowels of things'.

Nor was college life all sleep or work and no play. Newton was not interested in fishing or riding; and football was deemed by Duport a 'boisterous exercise' fit for clowns rather than scholars. But the young scholar excelled in draughts, less so at cards, but played a good game of chess and spent some time on the bowling green. He also paid the regular fee for use of the tennis courts, though visualizing young Isaac running around with a tennis racket might strain our muscles of imagination beyond the 'elastic limit' of Hooke's famous law of the spring. These detailed accounts of stern life and occasional play at Trinity open a window much wider than has hitherto been achieved by other biographers into the extraordinarily rich parallel, but interrelated worlds (the plural is important, as in the book subtitle) of a youth immersed in Scripture, sermons, and books of practical divinity.

There are penetrating accounts of the historical, religious and political undercurrents that shaped Newton's thoughts, life and character, particularly the major religious changes that occurred in England during 1630 to 1660. Equally important and woven into the text is the impact of major figures in natural philosophy and theology whose works Newton studied assiduously throughout his life. At Cambridge he researched leading philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, Henry More and Robert Boyle. He was initially enraptured by Descartes, before proceeding to dismantle his theory about vortices and 'indefiniteness', claiming that his metaphysics was 'nothing but a tapestry of assumptions'. In later years, there were numerous fruitful exchanges with the likes of Fatio de Duillier, Christopher Wren, Samuel Pepys and John Locke.

Another facet is how Rob Iliffe has cast the theological narrative within the matrix of the *prisca sapientia*, showing us how Newton was consciously working in this ancient tradition and therefore, that theology is honeycombed with 'meta-theology'; so to attempt any understanding of the former without viewing it in the wider context of the latter is to be faced with abstruse doctrines beyond comprehension (perhaps the failing of the learned professor mentioned above). Furthermore, and this is where other writers are lacking in emphasis, that

science and theology were not unrelated activities, although conducted in parallel for much of the time. But significantly, science was born from a theological womb, therefore *divinity and religion came first*, Newton's entire, massive output was aimed at demonstrating the image of God in Man and Nature (matter). Indeed mathematics constituted the bridge linking science with religion. Mountains have been written about the legendary work of 1687 which shook science to its core, his *Principia Mathematica* (incidentally, a title chosen as a counterblast to Descartes's *Principia Philosophiae*), but few, if any writers have appreciated, as Iliffe does, that this was a text in which Newton believed he had resurrected a major portion of the *prisca* known at the beginning of time and then gradually lost; and that natural philosophy was not a blind or mechanical affair, but a mainly *religious enterprise* through which one could come to some understanding of how God created, rather, imaged Himself in the world. As stated in his letters to Richard Bentley, *Principia* was written with a view to promoting belief in God among 'considering men'.

In this wise, Newton showed that the analogy between humans and the divine was much closer than previous philosophers had realized, and he showed how the process of creation had been reduced to the same problem of explaining how we moved our own bodies, that 'God may appear (to our innermost consciousness) to have created the world solely by an act of will, just as we move our bodies by an act of will alone' – the relationship between the human soul and the imagination being analogous to God's relationship with his cosmos. Then, in order to test his intuitions, Newton's devised an in-depth experimental research programme to investigate his own brain, the nature and content of dreams, and especially the nature of the created mind, because it is the image of God. These included a series of experiments designed to test the nature and heighten the power of the imagination, which he valued as the source of creativity. An analysis of chastity and the imagination formed part of a lengthy chapter on the origin and rise of monasticism (and may be read as applying also to Newton's own life of willed celibacy). But in all this, the existence of free-willed self-motion was a standing refutation of the materialist and allegedly atheistic ideas of Thomas Hobbes and René Descartes. A main religious tenet was a continuation of memory and being the same person after resurrection. Here it becomes obvious that any notion of mind and consciousness being solely the product of matter or else generated by the brain, therefore extinguished upon brain-death was a complete anathema to Newton.

We learn that Newton advocated a 'simple' and direct Christianity, appealing to direct sources, like the Primitive Creeds, without



the corrupting overlay of priestcraft. He maintained that the Christian polity should both permit and actively encourage a very wide range of religious beliefs. Crucially, Newton maintained that being a Christian primarily meant living the godly life according to the practical moral precepts of Christianity, having less to do with holding allegedly correct doctrines. A sinner was not condemned merely by 'the blind impuls of his nature', but did evil not because he could not do the right thing, but because he would not do what he could. Therefore, only by perfecting the intellect leading to a cultivation of perfect understanding, can a man acquire the sufficiently free will to choose good over evil.

Newton explicitly equated evil with folly (totally in consonance with Plato's reference to *anoia*, the irrational soul, and the Eastern teaching that *avidya*, ignorance is the greatest disease of all). Accordingly, the values needed to acquire understanding and for proper religious study by an earnest seeker of truth were frequent reading, constant meditation, 'earnest prayer to God to enlighten thine understanding if thou desirest to find the truth', and independent enquiry paying no attention to imaginative fancies, human authorities or the opinion of the mob. He had a revulsion for idolatry, cruelty, persecution, and papal authority believing that Roman Catholicism – the biggest political and religious threat in his own time – embodied all these aspects in their most virulent form, not to speak of the abomination that had arisen in the fourth century spurred by the Council of Nicaea. That was Trinitarianism, which maintained that God exists as three persons, or hypostases, but is one being: the persons being God the Father, God the Son (incarnate as the Christ), and God the Holy Spirit, each of them having the one identical essence, not merely similar natures.

Thence, Newton maintained, the corruption of religion was inevitably accompanied by the complete loss of true scientific knowledge, which happened when people began to take literally what the ancient mystical philosophers had only spoken allegorically. He understood the nature and historical role of this false religion through the lens of prophecy, having assiduously studied the Old and New Testament prophecies, paying particular attention to Revelation, with an intensity matching his energy in pursuit of natural philosophy.

In an important chapter 'Methodising the Apocalypse' we learn that he composed a dictionary of apocalyptic terms which included definitions and propositions. His prophetic 'Rules of Interpretation' – written before similar methodological prescriptions in the *Principia* – contained a rigorous methodology and rules of interpretation in order to keep 'private phantasy' at bay and

show that his own interpretations cohered with the consistent hermeneutical procedures of the prophets and ancient interpreters in India, Persia and Egypt whose nations had bordered the Hebrews – the fact that ancient nations all agreed in the fundamentals of their interpretations gave a firm basis for relying on them. Also long before he wrote *Principia*, Newton arrived at his basic conception of how apocalyptic images were ordered 'internally' and of how prophecy had been fulfilled in history. Critically, there were no grounds in the realm of prophecy for physical accounts of the End of the World, or for understanding literally, or physically any of the apocalyptic description, e.g. the flood. However, cataclysmic events and major cycles of existence were not excluded from consideration in natural philosophy – and *Principia* supplied the tools and techniques to do so.

Particularly illuminating are the descriptions about the two different types of intellectual artillery Newton used in his work, on the one hand, in ecclesiastical history, and on the other, in natural philosophy. In the former, his thorough undergraduate training in rhetoric and disputation, regarded as irrelevant to demonstration in natural philosophy, was used to great effect when he wrote on church history, putting on trial the chief corrupters of the faith by drawing upon all of the most authoritative architects of modern Protestant and Catholic orthodoxy using his litigating skills and humanist forensic techniques combined with documentary evidence, including the use of argument *ex silentio* (conclusions drawn from absence of evidence). This was applied to expose the wrongdoings of a whole panoply of historical figures especially, Athanasius and the Desert Fathers (whose extreme ascetic bodily practices only inflamed lust) regarded as amongst the chief corrupting and perverting influences on Christianity. It was also used to demolish the credibility of his chief contemporary adversaries like Robert Hooke (disingenuously referring to him in a letter as 'his honoured friend' and eulogising over his achievements) and then Gottfried Leibniz (referred to in a missive as his 'most sincere friend' adding that he valued friends more highly than mathematical discoveries) in the dispute over the intellectual property rights in the discovery of optics and universal gravitation (the inverse-square law), and the calculus, respectively.

Newton could present a coherent, learned and original argument in a relatively short time from scouring and manipulating data from oceans of manuscripts over a period of decades. But in natural philosophy, neither the style of legal argument, nor the evidence that witnesses provided was relevant to discovering and demonstrating scientific truths, which needed to be 'mathematical' to eschew any grounds for disputes: philosophy

was not a law-court. No amount of testimony could support the level of certainty demanded of true scientific statements. Probabilities, hypotheses and conjectures would drag the scientific community into a litigious chaos. However, in both spheres (which, incidentally, relate to the suspicious and virtuous traits of his character), Newton drew upon his phenomenal rational and analytical powers, the interplay of reason and experience, and the use of vast empirical evidence, being ever-mindful that his fertile imagination had to be tethered and tested and not given free rein to contaminate the truth.

The author admits that he has touched upon alchemy but lightly and this is one of two small regrets, since alchemy and theology (along with science, of course) were strongly intertwined in Newton's thought. Perhaps we may look forward to a further book on just this subject. Then, given on the intellectual influence on Newton of the hermetic philosophers, plus the substantial information on the central role of the Hermetic Axiom in Newton's thought and methodology, it would be good to have made explicit reference to Newton's translation of the Axiom found among his alchemical papers, which encapsulates these ideas and constituted the template of his ideas about the image of God in Man and nature.

In summary, that Newton's wrote volumes on theology is now generally known; so there is no need of another book to add to the existing stock on this subject. But what is yet hardly known, and barely even grudgingly admitted in academic scientific circles and needs every emphasis is this: to perfect himself and make his celibate life that of a godly man was the quest of a lifetime (the unfortunate hiatuses arising from his altercations with adversaries notwithstanding); the close intertwining between his religion and science; the well over half-century of unremitting research and study of texts ancient and modern that went into his theological writings to demonstrate the analogous relationship between the mind and the body, and between man and God; that God was not apart from, but ubiquitously present in the universe (although He should never be anthropomorphised as a being with a body with divisible parts); and that his epic works in natural philosophy were the outcome of his religious imperative which commenced much earlier.

These are just a few of the vital gaps filled by Rob Iliffe's book. For this and much else, science and religion owe him an especial debt of gratitude for his peerless insight and devotion to the subject to prove for all time that clearly, Newton wasn't all that 'stupid', nor even a 'silly boy'. Rather, that mainstream science and theology have, even to this day, largely ignored or perverted the

*innermost* thoughts and turned to account merely the physical husk of his great knowledge, but barely fathomed the depths of learning of ‘the last wonderchild to whom the Magi could do sincere and appropriate homage’ to use Lord Keynes’s words about a polymath and consummate genius for whom not even hyperbole would do justice to his advancement of human learning, science and religion.

#### Endnotes

- 1 This anecdote is attributed to Donald MacKinnon, appointed Professor of Divinity at Cambridge in 1960.
- 2 In sharp contrast to the recent hullabaloo caused by the warning issued by Professor Eugene Terentjev, a director of studies at Queens’ College, Cambridge to new undergraduates about ‘partying around’ because ‘physical sciences is a VERY hard subject, which will require ALL of your attention and your FULL brain capacity’. (*The Telegraph: Education* 17 November 2017.)
- 3 By contrast, the historian Edward Gibbon recounts how his tutor at Oxford in the 1750s ‘well remembered he had a salary to receive, and only forgot he had a duty to perform’.
- 4 The vast body of pristine knowledge possessed by the Ancients, largely lost, fragmented and forgotten, and in need of rediscovery.
- 5 See the splendid book by Stephen Phillips, *The Mathematical Connection Between Religion and Science* reviewed in *Network Review*, No. 113, Winter 2013.
- 6 A student once reported – presumably, humorously – that it was so difficult that not even its author understood it!
- 7 Also modern biographers with the major exception of, naturally, the author himself.
- 8 Isaac Newton. ‘Keynes MS. 28’. *The Chymistry of Isaac Newton*. Ed. William R. Newman, June 2010. Retrieved March 4, 2013 from: <http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/newton/ALCH00017>.

## A POET OF MEDICINE AND SCIENCE

Tim Houlding

### THE RIVER OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Oliver Sacks

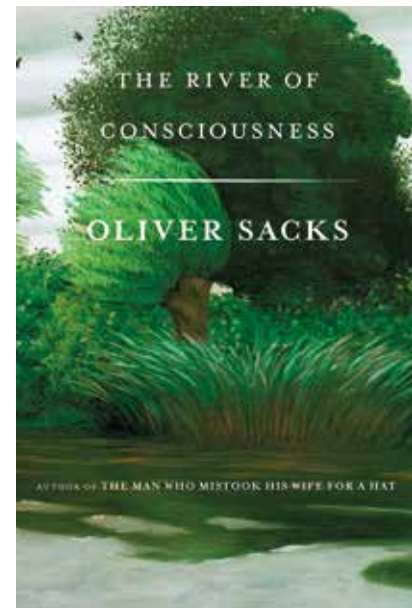
Edited by Kate Edgar,  
Daniel Frank and Bill Hayes

Picador Publishing, 2017,  
237 pp., £18.99, p/b – ISBN  
978-1447263647

Many of you will be aware of the work of the late Dr Oliver Sacks, who sadly died in August, 2015. Among his most celebrated books are “Awakenings” and “The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat”. His memoir, “On The Move”, was published shortly before his death and the book now reviewed, “The River of Consciousness”, was assembled posthumously by his three editors. In their introduction, his editors explain that one of the many catalysts for the book was an invitation Oliver Sacks received in 1991 from a Dutch film-maker to participate in a documentary television series called “A Glorious Accident”. In the final episode, six scientists- the physicist Freeman Dyson, the biologist Rupert Sheldrake, the paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, the historian of science Stephen Toulmin, the philosopher Daniel Dennett and Oliver Sacks -gathered around a table to discuss some of the most important questions: the origin of life, the meaning of evolution and the nature of consciousness.

“The River of Consciousness” honours the extraordinary observational acuity of Sacks’ three great heroes- Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud and William James. Moreover, and crucially, Sacks celebrates the trajectory of widening and deepening Man’s often rather patrician view of nature, particularly regarding the sentience and emotional responsiveness of other species.

Sacks’ humility is obvious in all his books and he deliberately seeks out this trait in other scientific observers. Thus, he draws our attention to Darwin’s thoughtful experiments and theories which questioned Carl Linnaeus’ doctrine of self-fertilisation of flowers. Darwin’s proposal that flowers’ special features - patterns, colours, shapes, nectars and scents - were lures to flying insects to promote pollination became ground-breaking in illuminating the co-evolution of plants and insects. Indeed, whilst Darwin’s ideas of plants’ tendrils being exquisitely sensitive to gravity, pressure, moisture, sunlight and chemical gradients were roundly dismissed in his day, research some fifty years later was to demonstrate that subtle plant hormones like auxins play many of the roles that nervous systems do in animals.



Sacks draws us further into the immense scope of consciousness within nature by describing Darwin’s conviction that the ability of plants and animals to modulate responses indicates “the presence of a mind of some kind” (quoted from Darwin). Sacks recounts in lyrical prose the work of George John Romanes who, in 1885, published a beautifully illustrated book on primitive nervous systems in jelly-fish, star-fish and sea-urchins. Romanes was to speak of his own work as “comparative psychology” and his main enterprise as an attempt to correlate the neural and the behavioural. Only once in the book does Sacks deliver a thundering excoriation in his condemnation of Descartes’ vivisection of animals to prove that their cries of pain were only reflexes.

Having introduced us to such pioneers, Sacks leads us into the world of human consciousness. He takes pains to honour the early neuro-anatomical work of Sigmund Freud, who established that it was not the morphology of nerve-cells that differed between primitive and advanced animals, but their organisation. Following work by the eminent neurologist, Paul Broca and others, the human cerebrum was mapped, correlating location with function. Sacks indicates to us that Freud was deeply dissatisfied with what he considered to be an overly mechanical thesis which regarded the brain as an ingenious, but idiotic, machine. Instead, Freud invoked the idea of “cortical fields”, large areas of cortex endowed with a variety of functions. Throughout the book, Sacks celebrates the exceedingly rare conjunction in truly great scientists of: meticulous acquaintance with structure; the ability to carefully penetrate experience and observe function;

the courage to challenge orthodoxy, often enshrined as dogma; finally, the exceptional talent of positing genuinely novel coherent theories.

Characteristic of his focus on the subjective, Sacks gives us vignettes of his own experience as he ages. His treatise on the fallibilities of memory and his own mis-hearings are typically humble and amusing. His treatment of creativity is wide-ranging and is punctuated with illuminating quotes from inspired creators as diverse as Henri Poincaré and the composer Wagner. Speaking of himself, Sacks describes his own epiphanies with these words: "I feel I can bypass or transcend much of my own personality, my neuroses. It is at once not me and the innermost part of me, certainly the best part of me."

In a chapter which shares the book's title, Sacks takes us on a fascinating elucidation of the nature of "the stream of thought", to quote William James. Indeed, James' ideas are cradled along with those of Henri Bergson, James Mill (father of John Stuart Mill) and Sir Charles Sherrington. Seamlessly, he moves forward with the work of Francis Crick and Christof Koch in pioneering the study of the neural basis of consciousness. Sacks pays a final tribute to William James by invoking James' idea that the coherence of consciousness depends upon each thought being born the owner of the thoughts that went before and (in James' words) "dies owned, transmitting whatever it realised as its Self to its own later proprietor". To me, this is a wonderful premonition of the later work of Alfred North Whitehead.

In his last chapter, Sacks highlights the oddly fragmented nature of scientific discovery much, perhaps, like biological evolution itself. Here, with characteristic modesty, he recalls his own observations of his neurological patients and contrasts the powerfully descriptive accounts of nineteenth century observers with the more formulaic and impoverished accounts of the last 120 years. His thesis is that fragmentation of scientific enquiry often follows the pure, descriptive phase and that the evolution of a coherent model requires an understanding of determinants at every level. Symbolically, Sacks uses the condition of scotoma (derived from the Greek for darkness) to parallel the blind-spots we may encounter in scientific enquiry. He is avid in encouraging us to take note of exceptions and to not forget or dismiss them as trivial. He quotes Wolfgang Koehler, a pioneer gestalt psychologist: "Each science has a sort of attic into which things are almost automatically pushed that cannot be used at the moment, that do not quite fit..... We are constantly putting aside, unused, a wealth of valuable material that leads to the blockage of scientific progress."

Sacks goes on to provide several examples of prematurity in science: Gregor Mendel; Oswald Avery who discovered DNA in 1944; Barbara McClintock who proposed jumping genes in the 1940s. This is no new phenomenon – Aristarchus in the third century B.C. clearly established a heliocentric model of the solar system which was swept away by Ptolemy's absurdly complicated geocentric confabulation five centuries later. This latter scotoma was to last a mere 1400 years and was, of course, defended with almost militaristic fervour. Sacks believes that Freud would explain this by emphasising resistance: the new idea is deeply threatening and hence is denied access to our full mind. A fitting homily to us all!

Sacks' emotional intelligence shines through all his published work and one feels sure that those whom he knew personally, including his beloved patients, will remember him as deeply intelligent, insatiably curious and incurably modest. This book is a fitting epitaph to a poet of medicine and science and an encourager to all authentic seekers.

*Tim Houlding is a retired medical practitioner and is currently writing an allegorical tale centred on the emergence of consciousness.*

## A DEEPER SENSE OF CONNECTION

David Lorimer

### ■ SCIENCE AND SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

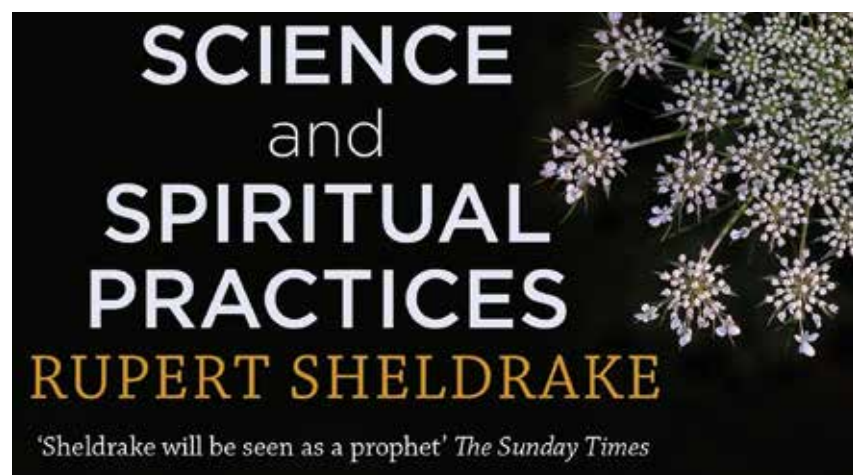
Rupert Sheldrake (Hon SMN)

Coronet, 2017, 247 pp., £20, h/b  
– ISBN 978-1-473-63007-9

One of the strategic effects of investment by the John Templeton Foundation has been extensive research into spiritual qualities and their relationship to health and well-being, for instance love,

gratitude, forgiveness and altruism. This has helped build the research base behind Rupert's new book, which is his most personal in relating the contents to his own development. He is a frequent target for militant atheists and materialists, who feel threatened by his open approach and creative experiments. He explains that he himself became an atheist as a teenager and budding scientist, and joined the Cambridge Humanist Association as an undergraduate - he relates an amusing anecdote about Sir Julian Huxley putting himself forward as the ideal sperm donor as a contribution to a more advanced form of humanity.

However, Rupert immediately experienced tension between the mechanistic objectivity of the scientific approach and his own feelings for animals and plants - they were killed in order to be studied, and everything was broken down into reductionist components. As a postgraduate he became a member of a group called the Epiphany Philosophers – 'an unlikely confluence of quantum physicists, mystics, Buddhists, Quakers, Anglicans and philosophers' for whom no topic was off-limits. He also spent a year at Harvard studying philosophy and history of science and had a seven-year research fellowship funded by the Royal Society, which gave him the freedom to research what he liked in any part of the world – it also gave him time to think, and is an opportunity analogous to a Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford. This led him to Malaysia and subsequently to India and Sri Lanka where he discovered totally different ways of looking at the world. He learned TM in Cambridge in 1971 and worked in India from 1974, writing his first book at Bede Griffiths' ashram - Father Bede was a huge influence in the way he bridged East and West, as well as opening him up to Christian mysticism. Later in the book, one also learns about the influence of his herbalist and pharmacist father and the experience of time spent in gardens.



The book discusses seven spiritual practices in which Rupert himself participates. These are meditation and the nature of minds, the flow of gratitude, reconnecting with the more than human world, relating to plants, rituals and the presence of the past, singing, chanting and the power of music, and pilgrimages and holy places. In each case, Rupert describes some of his own experience, the research behind it and offers a couple of practices for readers at the end of each chapter. These are all simple activities that anyone can incorporate in their daily lives.

In the meditation chapter, it is interesting to learn that some atheists like Sam Harris are also meditation teachers – they recognise the beneficial effects even without subscribing to the underlying philosophy. This raises an interesting point of interpretation, as many practitioners would feel that they are a microcosm of a more universal mind, to which they are relating during meditation or indeed prayer. Meditation is also a good example of spirituality developing outside formal religion. Rupert covers the recent history, including work of Herbert Benson on the relaxation response and Jon Kabat-Zinn on mindfulness. An attitude of gratitude is something we can all practise, and there is extensive evidence for its beneficial effects on well-being, happiness and health. In this respect, Rupert points out that Christians have more reason to be grateful simply because of the way they understand the relationship between life and God.

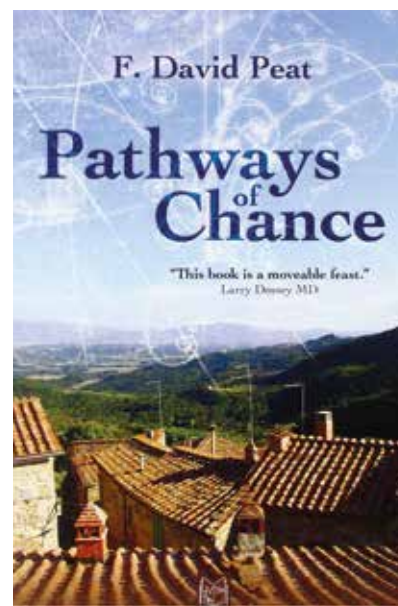
Some clinicians are now prescribing Nature in terms of walks and woods, and here we can perhaps reconnect with our own childhood experience, in my case climbing and sitting in trees; sadly, the time children spend in Nature is declining. Rupert explains the deeper roots of the split from Nature and God with the decline of animism - the Celtic tradition was particularly rich with such figures as St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. Protestantism paves the way for mechanistic science through a disenchanting attitude and the banning of pilgrimages, because they are not mentioned in the Bible. On the other hand, there was the influence of Romanticism and transcendentalism - Rupert nicely sums this up in a table summarising worldview, God, nature and evolution (p. 82). He also sees a recent revival of animism and panpsychism, and speculates about the sense in which the sun might be conscious.

He continues the theme of Nature with a chapter on plants, flowers and beauty, moving on to the significance of sacred groves and the relationship between tree trunks and the design of cathedral pillars. Thoreau and John Muir were pioneers in this respect, the latter referring to

Yosemite as a natural cathedral - here Rupert encourages us to take a bee's eye view of plants and to get to know a particular tree in our locality (another nice suggestion is finding a 'sit spot'). In the next chapter, he shows how rituals can connect us to the past through acts of remembrance, initiations and rites of passage - he links these with morphic resonance. He makes an intriguing connection between ritual drowning in full immersion baptism and the experience of NDEs, and also explains the background of sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity while pointing out that modern science sacrifices animals on an industrial scale in its experiments.

The chapter on singing, chanting and the power of music enables him to bring in the work of his wife Jill Purce as well as mantras, social entrainment and the effects of singing together. When allied to dance, this has been regarded with suspicion by religious authorities who impose certain restrictions. It is also worth mentioning his championing of Choral Evensong as a contemplative practice – see [www.choralevensong.org](http://www.choralevensong.org). In recent years, there has been a tremendous revival of interest in pilgrimage, and Rupert is a patron of the British Pilgrimage Trust. This gives people a direct experience of life as a journey, providing space for reflection in our overloaded world. He suggests that we can turn our journeys into pilgrimages, especially when visiting cathedrals, and I have on a number of occasions lit candles with him in such places.

In his conclusions where he describes the rise of modern secularism, he points out that the materialist worldview is in fact a belief system, not a statement of scientific facts as many believe - a case he made extensively in his previous book *The Science Delusion*. Religions are about consciousness and 'founded on the assumption that consciousness transcends the human level' - this is precisely a problematic area for scientific materialism. Rupert makes the interesting point that in giving up our ancestral religion, we are also giving up 'singing and chanting together, praying, participating in traditional rituals and festivals, and saying grace before meals.' (p. 201) The findings he discusses indicate that spiritual practices make people happier, healthier and less depressed, which is not surprising when one thinks of such practices as different forms of connection that are also nourishing and give us a sense of meaning. This is both a hopeful and helpful message from this lucid and important book that helps bridge science and spirituality for our time – and we can look forward with anticipation to the second volume.



## SYNCHRONISTIC PATTERNS

David Lorimer

### ■ PATHWAYS OF CHANCE

F. David Peat (late Hon SMN)

Pari Publishing, 2007, 180 pp.,  
£5 plus £1.50 UK p & p from  
the SMN office.

As readers will be aware, David Peat died in the summer – on the same day as Jung – before he was able to take part in our centenary conference on David Bohm, with whom he had a long and close relationship. I thought I would reread his autobiography, which interweaves a number of important themes with his life story. It is worth quoting his overall statement from the back cover at some length: 'the new vision I'm calling for would extend throughout all phases of our lives and transform not only ourselves but also our society and its activities. Hand-in-hand with that transformation comes a new order of thought, a new way of integrating experience, perception and knowledge; one that combines intellectual rigour with creative openness; one that values harmony and balance over formal logic and surface consistency. It is not that human reason is to be thrown out of the window but that reason should be enriched by a new logic of perception, compassion, harmony and love.' This sums up his work and approach, which brought together science, art, language, psychology and spirituality.

David was brought up in Liverpool and hugely influenced by his aunt, showing a precocious capacity and curiosity that sometimes needed to be curbed, such as when he dissolved part of the interior of

the fridge with his chemistry set. He also read voraciously in science, literature and art, and acquired an early and extensive knowledge of music - he was able to borrow records and develop his own tastes, from jazz to Bach. His art master encouraged him to contemplate great works, which he subsequently did in many galleries around the world, and which undoubtedly influenced his perceptions in other areas. In one of eleven 'excursions' woven into the book, he discusses his experience with the Blackfoot and the way their language worked, a theme he also developed with David Bohm.

At one point in his career, he was given the friendly advice to avoid David Bohm if he wanted to develop his own reputation - advice he naturally ignored. It is fascinating to read about how they talked and interacted together, and also about Sir Roger Penrose, who was also at Birkbeck at the time and whose seminars were memorable for their spontaneous creative brilliance. As readers of the last issue will appreciate, Bohm was as much a philosopher as a physicist, with an extraordinarily penetrating and subtle mind. Their conversations explored the nature of consciousness as well as dialogue and his ideas on the implicate order, undivided wholeness and active information. John Wheeler was another important influence with his move from observer to participator.

Participation is also implied in synchronicity, about which David wrote a book and gave courses. As a physicist, he was also interested in his relationship and work with Pauli. For David, synchronicity transcended the restrictions in time and space, and within the present are contained and enfolded the orders of time and the patterns of meaning to unfold. Synchronicity played an important role in bringing him to the hilltop village of Pari in Tuscany, where he spent the last 20 years of his life. For a while after he arrived, he literally did nothing - sitting in a deck chair looking out over the landscape. Gradually things began to take shape, the 'Palazzo' at the top of the hill was refurbished and served as a meeting space bringing people together from around the world to this magical place. The Pari Centre for New Learning was established, respecting the locals and the rhythms of the seasons, bringing new faces into this traditional landscape where people have been making olive oil and wine for centuries.

Beyond the passive observer of landscape, David explored 'inscape', a term coined by Gerald Manley Hopkins and representing our capacity to take each experience and perception as unique and authentic and reminding us that 'every

analysis is incomplete and provisional, dependent on a wider context'. Artists like Monet and Cezanne return 'again and again to that act of perception and depiction, each time discovering new levels of truth, yet questioning how that truth is to be made manifest in line, form, mass, colour, texture and so forth' in a new level or expression of integration. He illustrates this by conjuring up the process of Cezanne painting a group of apples, engaging each one directly, then in relation to the others: 'the order of the canvas is emerging both out of the authenticity of each object in itself and the dynamic position that it occupies upon the canvas.' (p. 134) Again, this is a process of participation and creative emergence.

The same applies to David's concept of gentle action, respecting context and systemic complexity as well as recognising the limits of control in a fundamentally holistic world. It is underpinned by harmony and love while respecting the danger of unpredicted consequences arising from linear thinking. He sums up these reflections in a series of guidelines: foster transparency and openness, respect the whole and competition, acknowledge redundancy, respect creativity and accept uncertainty. In reflecting on David's life and work, I am left with the sense of a quest for connection and a search for meaning across the disciplines while respecting the contribution each has to make in a dance within the whole.

## MEDICINE-HEALTH

### THE BREAST CANCER MINEFIELD

*David Lorimer*

#### ■ CHOOSING TO HEAL

Janet Edwards (SMN)  
Watkins, 2007, 260 pp.,  
£10.99, p/b.

Janet gave me a copy of this highly acclaimed book at our conference in June, and even though it is 10 years old, it is a gripping and important read that takes the lid off the cancer establishment while describing in detail her own harrowing experience. Her own background is as a performing musician, teacher and composer and now a practitioner of NLP. The book is in four parts, relating her personal story, then moving on to the politics of cancer, understanding it as a systemic disease and promoting a more holistic view of health.

An important background to the whole situation is the 1939 Cancer Act that binds doctors by law to offer only surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy as the standard treatment. There are

corresponding laws in other countries, and those offering alternative treatments are often hounded, have their businesses closed down and in extreme cases can be assassinated. This system goes hand in glove with the pharmaceutical industry and its dominance of medical systems - Janet quotes the sale of chemotherapy drugs as increasing from \$3 billion in 1989 to \$13 billion in 1998 - sales of the top 10 cancer drugs in 2015 totalled more than \$40 billion. The philosophy behind this is essentially mechanistic and impersonal, focused more on curing than healing and failing to realise that health and disease are systemic and that the body needs support to carry out healing processes. Our bodies have become industrialised, and the patient is seen as a passive and hopefully compliant bearer of disease.

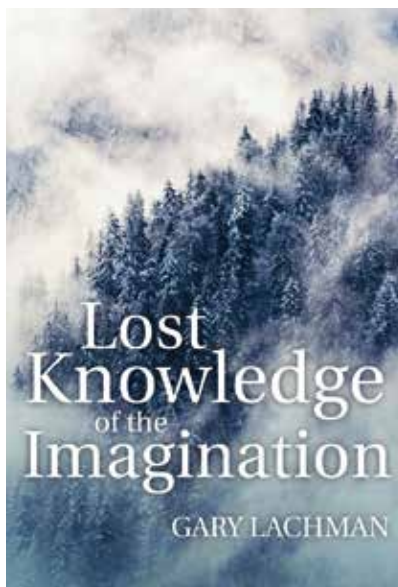
The result is that many patients like Janet find themselves railroaded into precipitous treatment by the experts who genuinely think they are doing the right thing, given their training and the legal restrictions. Janet first followed the orthodox route of mastectomy and chemotherapy, only gradually finding out that the average effectiveness of chemotherapy is between 10 and 15% - it is in fact an indiscriminate all-out attack on the immune system, and there is tremendous pressure to conform. People have to show great courage, like Janet, in striking out on a different path and following their instincts and intuitions about how health and the body actually work. She goes to see Dr Fritz Schellander, who was a Network Member, and he recommends a treatment in Germany by Dr Waltraud Fryda, which she immediately takes up. One of the most interesting aspects of her restorative work is the observation that many breast cancer patients have low adrenaline as a result of prolonged stress. The main components were diet and daily injections, with the underlying understanding of cancer as a systemic condition that has taken time to build up and will take time to heal. Janet describes the details from her journal, and perhaps the most important psychological point is her sense of empowerment reflected in the book's title, *Choosing to Heal*.

For those unfamiliar with the politics of cancer, this section will be a revelation, dealing as it does with mammography and radiation, Tamoxifen and similar chemotherapy drugs and quoting the stories of a number of other women. Mammography seems a pretty brutal and painful procedure, which she describes, and in her case it seems probable that the mammogram played a role in the rapid appearance of her lump. Risks are played down and some experts like Michael Baum have become outspoken critics,

and it seems that between 10 and 30% of breast carcinomas are in fact missed. Even more worryingly, a Canadian study found that death from breast cancer for women undergoing mammography was 36% higher than those who received only a physical examination. We know that chemotherapy drugs are by definition cytotoxic, and severe risks are involved in taking this route to a cure, and the WHO formally designated Tamoxifen as a carcinogen.

The medical establishment is steeped in a mechanistic view of the body, and does not accept the effectiveness of treatments such as demonstrated by the Gerson Therapy and other ecological and holistic approaches. This is the essence of the philosophical division between mechanistic and holistic approaches that understand the body and disease as systemic and best understood in process terms, including psychosomatic factors. Holistic approaches also stress lifestyle and prevention and are focused primarily on the promotion of health, while the orthodox system is embedded in extensive financial and political systems. One example was the lobbying by the American Medical Association against research into nutritional cancer therapies, which contributed to the defeat of a bill in the Senate. This kind of suppression not only of research, but also of alternative treatments is one of the greatest scandals of our time, and we need a revolution to put health first and financial and political interests second; however, no one with power ever gives it up willingly, so this will involve a sustained grass roots campaign - perhaps aided by the ever-increasing cost of drugs to national health systems.

The latter part of the book contains a great deal of good advice on health in general and cancer treatment in particular. Janet concludes that 'the health of the adrenal, hormonal (endocrine) and immune systems is a golden key to unravelling this disease.' (p. 159) - and this includes the removal of stress and detrimental environmental factors that can promote the return of the disease. This is a passionate, well-informed and highly significant book - better read by women in particular while still healthy, but essential for those coping with their own cancer.



## PHILOSOPHY- SPIRITUALITY

### REDISCOVERING IMAGINATION

Nicholas Colloff

#### ■ LOST KNOWLEDGE OF THE IMAGINATION

Gary Lachman (SMN)

Floris Books, 2017, 161 pp.,  
£20, p/b - ISBN  
978-178250-445-0

When Goethe was a student in Strasbourg, he became fascinated by the cathedral which, for two centuries from its 'completion', had been the tallest building in the world. He would climb it as an opportunity to overcome vertigo (sic) and studied it in detail especially as it shifted its appearances in differing patterns of light. He became convinced that its tower was incomplete and before leaving the city sketched for his friends how it ought to look if it followed its 'right form'. Unbeknownst to him, it had been left uncompleted and his drawing beautifully captured the architect's original intention. Goethe's practiced imagination had discerned the cathedral's uncompleted potential.

Imagination in this compact, erudite and thoughtful book is not as the Merriam-Webster dictionary would have it, 'the ability to imagine things that are not real' but as the writer, Colin Wilson, put it, 'the ability to grasp realities that are not immediately present' and as a way of deeper engagement with the world not an escape from it.

But how did this devaluation of imagination and its accompanying knowledge come to be?

It began, Lachman argues, with the Greek philosophers whose singular contribution to thought was to discover the power of abstraction and the ability to assess the world in terms of quantity and rule. This power was deeply amplified in the seventeenth century not only in terms of thought but now increasingly in the feedback loop created by the actual manipulation of the world. Descartes, for example, was helped to think in the way that he did precisely because he had new metaphors and analogies to hand in the machinery he handled in front of him. Ironically in a sense the fruits of imagination turned on their creators.

For knowledge became increasingly associated with the language of rationality that has been shaped for analysing into parts, creating rules and disembodied knowledge into the abstract and collective: the average rainfall that yet never falls. Imagination that deals in wholes and patterns of meaning cannot easily be translated into the abstract. It requires an embodying experience that can be shown, indicated, caught but not simply explained. Though both knowledges and their accompanying languages require to be learnt whilst the former is absorbed mainly by the linear application of a given intelligence, the latter requires a transformation into lived experience - what you see, hear, embody - is conditioned by who you are.

No sooner had this split emerged than it attracted its critics. Most notably Pascal responded to Descartes by reasserting the reasons of the heart that reason cannot fathom, most essentially for him the nature of religious experience - the God of personal encounter - of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - not of the philosophers. He made a distinction between what he called 'the spirit of geometry' and 'the spirit of finesse'. The former working with exact definitions, the latter with ideas or perceptions not capable of exact definition but recognised precisely nonetheless - for example the beauty of a scene or knowing that I am in love.

But Pascal's response is insufficient if we are to defend the place of the imagination in knowing because rather than heal a split, it accepts it, allowing for two types of knowing to part company and travel on parallel lines. To such a split was Pascal's agonised consciousness bound. Reason needs to be enfolded back into the heart if the world is to be seen meaningfully. Geometry needs finesse if the dance of the world is to be seen whole. After all the world is a process not a thing.

Meanwhile, the more the world changed - for good as well as ill - the greater our attention was led outwards, the

less purchase did we have on our inner, value setting, meaning-weaving world. Thus, we lose ourselves as isolated islands of flickering consciousness in a fundamentally inert world, stripped of any purpose other than the ones we confer on it. And, ironically, our world built on this ability to abstract becomes more and more divorced from any sustainable, habitable world we might want to live in.

Thus, we need alternative epistemologies to rebalance the way we perceive the world and what we value.

The possible elements of such an epistemology are deftly woven into Lachman's discussion of key, post-seventeenth century Western thinkers (and their older luminaries), who have defended and elaborated the place of imagination in how we come to see and understand the world.

It is a galaxy of fascinating thinkers, many familiar - like Coleridge, Goethe and Jung - less so like Ernst Junger, Erich Heller and Kathleen Raine. Nor are these thinkers 'merely' philosophers or poets. Goethe valued his science more than his art and Lachman too marshals more undisputed scientific giants, including Einstein and Heisenberg, in defense of the value of intuiting the imaginatively whole and discovering what you may then amplify with analysis.

What are some of these elements of an imaginative epistemology?

If we study the development of language, argued Owen Barfield, we notice that we have moved from poetic, participatory speech that sees ourselves as participating in a world to partakers in prose who see the world as 'out there' primarily as a place to be used. What we see is dependent on the evolution of our consciousness - our ancestors' world was not our own - our descendants' world might be different. Our present viewing is thus provisional; and, this separation from participation, though a wrench and fraught with risk, was a potential boon as we might find ourselves moving forward into at a more self-aware, conscious participation in the web of life.

If this is true, there must be a connection between what governs our 'inner' world and what rules our 'outer' world. The inner is not merely 'subjective' and the 'outer' is more subject to our states of consciousness than our normal, habitual mode of thought conceives. This possibility is one entertained by certain practitioners of phenomenology, including its modern founder, Husserl. Our apprehension of the world is influenced by our intentionality. We are the world's

co-creators rather than simply a passive mirror or recording camera.

Meanwhile, our manner of intentionally apprehending the world can be developed. We can step back out of our habits and attentively practise deeper forms of seeing. Goethe's youthful encounter with Strasbourg cathedral led him to elaborate a whole approach to the natural sciences that placed emphasis on a careful, highly attentive approach to phenomena as they presented themselves in multiple conditions so that, slowly, you would identify the inherent forms framing their reality and imagine their unfolding potential states. Goethe claimed to have done this for the plant world - seen the 'Urpflanze' - the primal plant from which all actual and potential plants flow. This he saw - it was neither a Platonic form apprehended by intellect alone nor a sensory object but was held in an 'imaginal' space between idea and sense. This notion may seem remote from the actual practice of biology yet Barbara McClintock, the Nobel Prize winner for her work in plant morphology, first injunction to her students was the very Goethe like: "First learn to see"!

This 'imaginal' space can be elaborated upon by its dedicated explorers. It has many mansions and levels. Though as with the twelfth century Islamic philosopher and visionary, Suhrawadi, the eighteenth century Swedish scientist and mystic, Swedenborg, and the twentieth century psychotherapist, Jung, the content of your descriptions may be culturally preoccupied, their structure and patterning harmoniously resonate. Meanwhile, the deeper you go, paradoxically, the more you realise that this 'inner' space, in fact, may actually, enfold the outer. The outer world is a concretisation of imaginal form expressing that spaces multiple potentials. Everything in the 'outer' world corresponds to a form in the 'inner'.

But, at the same time, you come to recognise that such an exploration is as rule bound as the practice of any other discipline lest you lose yourself. Imagination requires responsibility and practice in its exercise if we are not to lose our way; and, finding our way requires us to consistently link what we imagine with how we are in the world. The world must 'answer' our imagination in ways that resonate with the true, the good and the beautiful. The reasons of the heart are reasonable, orderly, available to canons of coherent truth telling.

Now I must confess these are my selected elements since I have a sneaking metaphysical commitment to idealism - that consciousness is the matrix from which the world is imaginatively fashioned

- and to realism - that this fashioning is regular and law like.

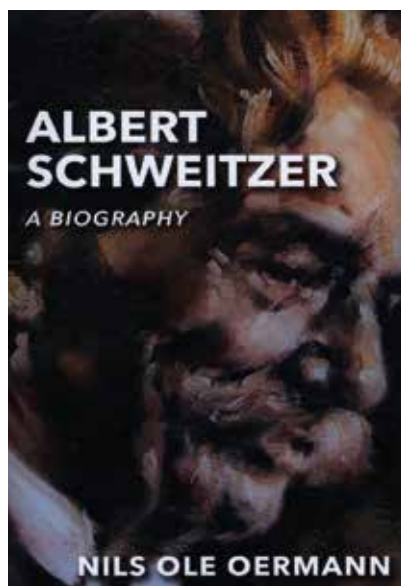
But reading and learning from the *Lost Knowledge of the Imagination* does not require any such commitment - it was not Goethe's for example - for the book is a more excellent and catholic compendium than my selection allows. Lachman's gift is the intelligent suggestion of pathways to be considered rather than foreclosing on one metaphysical domain as his 'own'.

Thus, there are, at least, four levels or types of imagination embodied in the text.

First, as one way in which the brain processes knowledge such as in Iain McGilchrist's creative reinvention of the right/left brain conversation. Second as a way we can creatively adjust our perception of a world by projected meanings. See how the Romantic poets invented 'wilderness' and the 'sublime' such that we see the Alps differently from our eighteenth century forebears. Third as a way of linking an inner and outer world that are different in their mode of operation yet linked. As in Goethe's assumption that you can see the primal plant and sense how it unfolds its potential in the world yet being metaphysically agnostic about in what that linkage consists or as in Jung's synchronicity as an acausal connector between inner and outer. Fourth, consciousness as fundamentally constitutive of the world and imagination as its primary faculty for embodying it as is implied by Coleridge's assertion that our primary imagination is of the same kind, though more limited than, the imagination that created the world: "that eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." Coleridge had read his Bishop Berkeley.

The great virtue of the book is that it allows you to explore all these possibilities and undoubtedly more and their related thinkers for which Lachman's accounts are models of stimulating concision, and how they might connect both with each other and in correcting our current one sided (and debilitating) fantasy that the only knowledge that counts is the 'language of geometry'.

This, when you consider it, is a peculiar imbalance for so much of what we actually value, in the very texture of daily life, is embodied imagining - the art of our gardening, the poetry of our loves, even the finesse of our working including, as Einstein attests, the intuitions of our discoveries. All require knowledge of the rational kind but all transcend it, enfold it in the patterns that connect and the meanings that are revealed.



## ENERGY FOR THE MORAL IMAGINATION

David Lorimer

### ■ ALBERT SCHWEITZER – A BIOGRAPHY

Nils Ole Oermann

Oxford, 2017, 263 pp., £30, h/b – ISBN 978-0-19-878422-7

As far as I know, this is the first biography of Albert Schweitzer for some time. I have read most of the earlier ones, including by James Brabazon first published in 1975, with a revised edition in 2000. Others date from earlier periods and take more or less critical views. It used to be said that biography was one of the new terrors of death, but these began to come out during Schweitzer's lifetime. He is a good example of someone put on a pedestal as perhaps the greatest man in the world subsequently found to have feet of clay in some respects, hence such titles as *Verdict on Albert Schweitzer*. Although he himself cultivated his public image, he was equally aware of some inconsistencies, remarking to his daughter that he was not a book with a well-constructed plot, but a man, with all a man's contradictions.

This very fair-minded and detailed biography by a professor of ethics at Leuphana University seeks to discover the real Schweitzer behind the facade. However, it is true of all of us that we reveal different aspects of ourselves in different contexts. There may therefore be many equally real identities. The biography is very strong on Schweitzer's overall life history, a familiar tale to many, although much less so than 50 years ago. We see his early development combining faith with reasoning and a strong sense of empathy. However, Schweitzer was far from a model

student, especially in subjects that did not interest him, and the author shows how this continued to be true even at doctoral level with his studies of philosophy and theology. He evidently failed to prepare properly for the practical theological subjects in his doctorate interview in 1900. Many were wary of his liberal views, especially in the Paris Missionary Society with whom he eventually worked. For Schweitzer, Jesus was essentially an ethical role model, which he himself strove to follow through his path of service. Other theologians accused him of failing to understand God as a personal presence. His approach was mystical and life-affirming, as he eventually formulates his ethic of Reverence for Life and the notion of ethical mysticism.

Schweitzer wrote his original biography of Bach in French, then re-worked it into a much longer German version, much to the dismay of his German publishers, although the book actually sold very well, and royalties from this and other books made a substantial contribution to his income. He considered Bach as the fifth evangelist and developed the idea of his music as pictorial, which he also interpreted beautifully himself in playing the organ preludes and fugues, always seeking to convey their architecture (he studied with Widor in Paris as a young man). Listening to his organ playing was my first encounter with Schweitzer as a teenager before becoming acquainted with his philosophical work. He completed the Bach biography during his medical studies by burning the candle at both ends, supplemented with copious coffee and keeping himself awake by soaking his feet in cold water!

One of the special features of this biography is the light it sheds on the role of his wife Helene Bresslau and their relationship, drawing as it does on extensive correspondence (the archive contains overall 65,000 letters to Schweitzer himself). Their correspondence between 1902 and 1913 was only published in 1992. She had equally wide ranging interests, and had spent two years studying at the conservatory as well as art history. They first met in 1898 and she too came up against family resistance when she announced that she intended to study as a nurse (Schweitzer's mother never accepted his career change). They shared a vision of responsibility and service, but this was to prove more difficult for them to realise together, to a large extent because of Helene's health problems which included a serious back injury after a skiing accident - few women skied in those days - and long-standing tuberculosis. Moreover, the African climate with its 100% humidity was extremely challenging for Europeans, even those with robust health. Helene also corrected and

discussed his proofs, and at a later stage took an active part in fundraising for the hospital.

Work in the hospital at Lambarene, where Schweitzer was chief builder and foreman, was seriously affected by both world wars. In 1917, the Schweitzers were sent back to an internment camp near the Pyrenees, and the hospital had to be more or less rebuilt when he returned in 1924. In addition, there were considerable financial challenges over many years, eased when Schweitzer began to win prizes, culminating eventually in the Nobel Peace Prize. The period immediately after the war corresponded to Schweitzer's low point, and he felt that people had forgotten about him. A turning point came with a letter from Archbishop Soderblom in Sweden around Christmas 1919, inviting him to give a series of lectures at the University of Uppsala over Easter 1920. These were followed by invitations from Oxford and Cambridge, and eventually from Edinburgh where he delivered the Gifford Lectures, sadly never published. At the same time, he would give organ recitals, which were one of the main ways in which he raised funds for the hospital.

The lectures themselves frequently addressed the philosophy of civilisation and ethics, to which he had turned his attention. The two volumes published were *The Decay and Restoration of Civilisation* and *Civilisation and Ethics* (1923). For Schweitzer, philosophy should issue in practical ethical action, rather than being preoccupied with abstract speculations. He did not share the pessimism of Oswald Spengler, and the biography shows the extensive influence of Nietzsche as well as Goethe on his thinking - indeed, I think his lectures on Goethe are among the most interesting of his writings, and it is fascinating to understand the parallels that he saw between himself and Goethe. Schweitzer's practical and ethical approach reflects his theology and impatience with dogma - the dogmatic theologian Karl Barth regarded Schweitzer as 'problematic'.

Schweitzer was catapulted to international fame by a series of feature articles and especially by the award of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. People had been lobbying for this award as far back as the 1930s and he had even asked his Swedish benefactress to prevent the award, as he thought it might undermine his existing support base for funding the hospital. He was apparently told on arrival at the Nobel ceremony that he only had 30 minutes instead of the anticipated 80 for his speech, so he had to cut it drastically and did not deliver it in the impassioned manner he had hoped. However,



apparently 30,000 predominantly young people gathered in front of the town hall and a collection over the next three days yielded 315,000 crowns, more than double the prize money. In the late 1950s and at the instigation of Norman Cousins as well as Einstein (who regarded his moral influence as equivalent to that of Gandhi), Schweitzer became involved in the nuclear issue, and his 1957 Declaration of Conscience was broadcast and translated around the world. He was concerned about the way in which we had sunk deep into inhumanity during the world wars and he promoted the politics of peace over the politics of power.

Schweitzer's stance did not go unnoticed by leaders of the German Democratic Republic, who tried to enlist him as a supporter of the cause by association. They were trying to bring his engagement against nuclear armament into line with their own political agenda, and the book discusses this issue of political neutrality in some detail, including that he understood that he was being co-opted but from a pragmatic point of view he was not going to refuse contributions to his hospital. The author characterises him as a remarkable *homo politicus* who kept up with current affairs even from the jungle, although he tried to avoid advancing any specific political agenda 'staging himself as if he were a politician without acting as a politician'.

In the summer of 1964 at the age of 89, he made his own wooden coffin, and it seems that he was only ill for a few days before he died, handing over the direction of the hospital to his daughter Rhenia only a fortnight before his death. Coming to the end of the book, I do think that the author has achieved his aim of describing the 'real' Schweitzer, despite my caveats above. He may well be right that Schweitzer was promoting a certain image of himself by travelling third class in a threadbare jacket, but I think Norman Cousins hit the mark when he said that in Schweitzer's life and work will be found energy for moral imagination. As the author points out, in addition to his authenticity and integrity he added many-sided talents in terms of 'organisational skills combined with leadership qualities as well as the ability to think strategically and practically.' He goes on: 'quite a few people have degrees in both theology and philosophy, but not many of them can raise the money for a hospital then build it, all the while writing bestsellers and performing as a world-class organist.' For me, Schweitzer has always been about inspiration and making the most of one's capacities – uniting thought with action and living one's convictions in a global context for the common good. As he himself said, our overall task is to become more finely and deeply human.

## MYTHOS AND LOGOS

David Lorimer

### ■ RELIGION AS METAPHOR

David Tacey

Transaction Publishers, 2015, 258 pp., £61.59 (reduced from £76.99!), h/b – ISBN 978-1-4128-5610-2. Also available as an e-book for £27.99.

This is a book that should be widely read, but sadly the publishers are pricing it out of the reach of ordinary readers – so hopefully it will soon appear in paperback. Subtitled 'beyond literal belief', this searching study steers a middle course between the Scylla of uneducated belief or religious literalism and the Charybdis of educated disbelief or fundamentalist atheism. As a sympathetic scholar of Jung, David parts company with Freud and Dawkins by maintaining that religion is in fact metaphorical rather than illusory or delusory. It is a serious error to conflate belief with faith – his view is that 'religion is not a series of dogmas to be believed, but a collection of poems to be experienced' (p. 103) Knowledge can destroy belief, but not faith.

Both science and nearly 200 years of biblical criticism have made it increasingly problematic – even untenable – to take a literal view of the Bible, even though millions still do – some readers may recall my review of *Beyond Belief* in *Network Review* 122, where James MacDonald spelled out the history of distortions, mistranslations, forgeries and interpolations not only in the New Testament but also in the development of Jesus into an archetypal and mythical figure (c.f. the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith). Hence David's argument that the only credible way forward is to interpret religion methodologically and symbolically so as not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. He advocates a renewal of faith, but dissociated from belief. In a series of chapters, he discusses the status of miracles, the soul's symbolic code, Jesus the metaphor, the myths of the virgin birth and resurrection, and the symbolic meaning of apocalypse and waking up. He agrees with Joseph Campbell when he said that every religion is true when understood metaphorically, but when metaphors are interpreted as facts, then there is trouble.

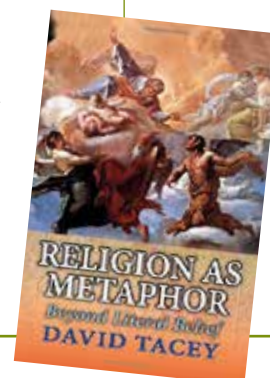
David's position opens him up to attack from both sides of the fundamentalist divide, both literalists and the new atheists. While I am very sympathetic

to his quest, I do part company with him on his interpretation of some miracles – he categorises them all as metaphorical, while I would maintain that at least the healing miracles are credible in relation to evidence through the ages up to our own time – spiritual figures like Peter Deunov and St Padre Pio have reproduced such phenomena, although I would agree with him on other matters such as feeding the 5,000 and turning water into wine. He is anxious to avoid any taint of supernaturalism, which I think also affects his interpretation of the resurrection. For me, the Pauline distinction between the natural and spiritual body makes a lot of sense in terms of modern studies of post-mortem apparitions. Some early theologians like Tertullian were keen to insist on the extreme and incredible position of the resurrection of the flesh rather than the body.

Ironically, the rise of science and its one-dimensional insistence on logos was paralleled by the continuing literalism of fundamentalists and the Protestant focus on the Word rather than tradition. Neither understood the meaning of mythos and its relation to logos, which is beautifully explained by Karen Armstrong when she says that myth was concerned with the timeless and constant, with meaning and context, directing our attention to the eternal and universal. Similarly, Mircea Eliade writes that myth is not a stage of consciousness but rather a structure in the content of consciousness, while Jung reflected that we have become rich in knowledge, but poor in wisdom. Myth is naively defined as falsehood rather than another layer of meaning expressed symbolically.

An important theme running through the book is transformation, the real meaning of *metanoia*, which fundamentalists must translate as repentance – sin (*hamartia*) literally means missing the mark. Jesus came to initiate a more intimate and inner relationship with God, a spiritual revolution that is also a recovery of spirit and in sympathy with gnosis. David urges the reader to wake up to interiority, the immanent Divine leading to a new self beyond the narcissism of the separate ego, a journey towards completion and wholeness rather than perfection. It is our normal state of relative somnolence that needs to be overcome and deconstructed, as Socrates also advocated.

The demythologisation agenda of Rudolf Bultmann is not enough since beyond deconstruction we need reconstruction and Jungian re-mythologisation, the



acquisition of symbolic literacy. Symbols are spiritually but not literally true. In an interesting exchange with the progressive theologian Don Cupitt (whom I knew in Cambridge in the late 1970s with his book *The Myth of God Incarnate*), David rightly pulls him up as demonstrating the perils of a purely intellectual approach to religion, leading to rationalism, reductionism, relativism, atheism and nihilism. By contrast, he contends that faith requires a hermeneutics of affirmation and a symbolic depth. New atheists like Christopher Hitchens set up a straw man by arguing that the Gospels must in some sense be literally true, which leaves no room for a subtler and deeper approach beyond sophisticated and educated disbelief. We can follow pioneers like Meister Eckhart and Blake, as David suggests, and he could also have mentioned the work of Swedenborg in the 18th century, who systematically explained the symbolic meaning of what his contemporaries took literally. So while I personally would not entirely bracket off what we call the supernatural from the natural, I am persuaded by David's overall argument that a symbolic approach is the only meaningful way forward. This book is a significant and welcome contribution to this important debate.

## AN AUDACIOUS LIFE

David Lorimer

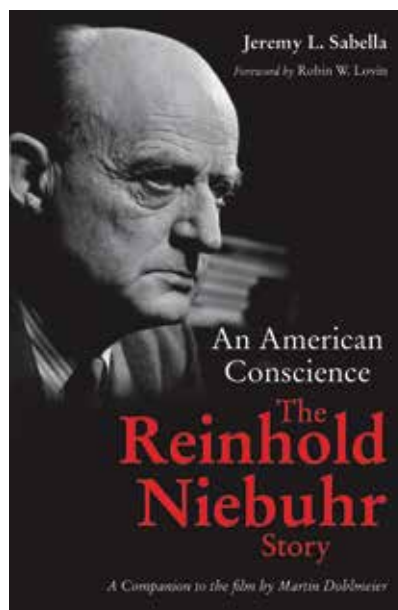
### ■ AN AMERICAN CONSCIENCE – THE REINHOLD NIEBUHR STORY

Jeremy L. Sabella

Wm B. Eerdmans, 2017,  
155 pp., \$xx, p/b – ISBN  
978-0-8028-7527-3

Film by Martin Doblmeier,  
62 mins DVD

I first read Reinhold Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society* in May 1979, and thereby hangs a tale. I was teaching in Edinburgh at the time, and took some naval cadets out in a dinghy on the Firth of Forth, when a squall blew up, the boat capsized and down went on an expensive camera and pair of binoculars. However, the book floated and survived the incident. Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) is rightly characterised as an American conscience, although he is perhaps best known for the serenity prayer – "God give us grace to accept with serenity things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other." This prayer is also a good commentary on his life of spiritual activism, beginning as a young pastor in Detroit, where he attacked Henry Ford for his hypocrisy and poor treatment of his workers.



As indicated above, this is both a book and a DVD describing Niebuhr's influence, and incidentally how his approach different from his theologian brother H. Richard Niebuhr, a professor at Yale. Perhaps his essential parameters are the relationship between love, justice and power, applied in a variety of situations and contexts. He was an early advocate of an engaged social gospel appealing to conscience but also recognising human limits and incapacities. *Moral Man and Immoral Society* was the first book to bring him into prominence – it was widely read as well as fiercely criticised, especially by liberals 'who imagine that the egoism of individuals is being progressively checked by the development of rationality or the growth of a religiously inspired goodwill and that nothing but the continuance of this process is necessary to establish social harmony between all human societies and collectives.' The problem arises when the selfishness of the individual is sublimated into national or group egoism, so moral people can behave immorally within a group. Later, Niebuhr said he would have adjusted the title along the lines of immoral man and his even less moral society – all of which points to the limitations of the human, what Christian theologians would call sin, or the fallen state, and other more secular thinkers egoism. As we have seen only too clearly in the history of the 20th century, reason is insufficient for us to progress from ignorance to knowledge, from superstition to enlightenment, from brutishness to civilisation. This was clear even as early as 1790 in France with the reason-inspired reign of terror.

Ironically, when Niebuhr became involved in government policy issues in the late 1940s, he also had a 600-page FBI file, which itself is indicative of the ambivalent

nature of power. He realised the implications of atomic power developed by science, but also the danger of naive American exceptionalism that justified violence against a supposed evil enemy, in this case communism that had to be resisted by force, even nuclear. Niebuhr, however, was not a pacifist, and changed his approach towards intervention during the First World War and later with respect to Hitler - Dietrich Bonhoeffer spent a year at the Union Theological Seminary, where Niebuhr was teaching. Interestingly, he regarded the theology as rather thin, and merely the handmaid of social ethics. One should note, though, that Paul Tillich also taught there, with his theology of Being. During the 1950s, Niebuhr found that US leaders no longer wanted to hear about the corrosive character of power or the moral peril of hubris as the CIA took an increasingly subversive international role with government distancing itself through the tactic of plausible denial. At the same time, Niebuhr's thinking had an influence on Martin Luther King, and later on President Carter, who appears on the film. Such people are concerned with the relationship between means and ends and the role of political power, intervention and coercion. Rather than the US image as a crusader for freedom and justice, Niebuhr suggested that a better image would be the bumbling knight from Don Quixote, which did not go down well.

A stroke slowed Niebuhr down in his late 50s, but he continued to work at the central themes of love, justice and power. He formed a close friendship with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and they spent many hours walking and talking together, sharing their 'vision of social justice, their withering condemnation of injustice, and their clarion call to hope'. Niebuhr asked his friend speak his funeral, hence a Jew was giving the eulogy for one of America's greatest Christian theologians. Heschel remarked on his purity of heart, disgust with intellectual falsehood and with spiritual sham, the strength given to our faith and the wisdom imparted to our minds. For many in the film, his inspiration was one of moral courage and audacity, speaking truth to power and not flinching from the consequences of being true to one's conscience. In fact, putting the Serenity Prayer into practice.



## ANCIENT, UNIVERSAL AND THUS CONTEMPORARY WISDOM

Elleke van Kraalingen

### ■ THE WISDOM OF PATANJALI'S YOGA SUTRAS - A NEW TRANSLATION AND GUIDE

Ravi Ravindra (Hon SMN)

Shaila Press, 2015, 219 pp., \$ 20,  
p/b - ISBN 978-0-9690572-4-6

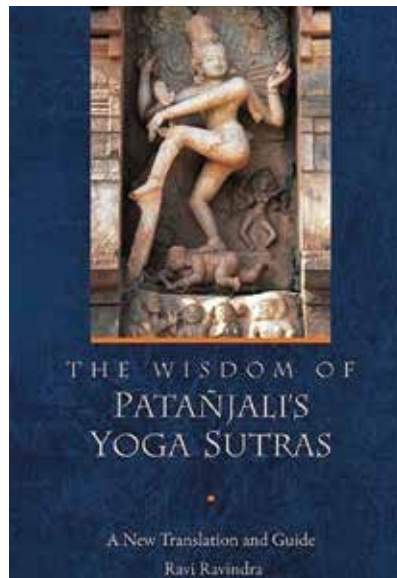
Throughout the ages innumerable books have been written since the invention of the script. Many of which could save our lives, if we would live according to the principles of the author. Of all the wonderful books I have read, I still find the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali the most valuable book. My first copy traveled with me in my bag pack when I hitch hiked through Europe at the age of 18 and since then I have read quite a few different translations and commentaries in several languages throughout the years. I have taught its philosophy for 30 years in my Raja Yoga Teacher Training Courses and wrote a translation of the Sutras myself.

It is a source book, like the Bible for the Christian, the Koran for the Muslim, the Dhamma Pada for the Buddhist. The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali are over 2000 years old and its wisdom is universal as well as applicable and nowadays, it has even become more actual than ever before. For the Yoga Sutras are about mind training and management of the mind. The Sutras take you from self-study to study of the Higher Self.

Since yoga has become a hype and the fastest growing 'sport' in the world and mindfulness has become a trademark, it is worthwhile for the serious practitioner to investigate its source and true meaning. For the serious reader the Sutras offer numerous most practical instructions to train our mind, to explore our higher consciousness and to access and unfold our true potential.

The Yoga Sutras are written in a pure and compact way, in order to convey its wisdom only to serious readers who can read with their heart as well as with their head and who can verify its universal truth by their own inner experience.

This wisdom can easily get tainted when the translator only has intellectual understanding of the material. In Ravi Ravindra's book this is not the case. Ravi writes and explains the Sutras from a



deeper understanding and many years of experience. Ravi makes the Sutras very accessible for the reader who has just embarked on the journey of Yoga philosophy and he is able to integrate and illustrate many passages with his own experiences and insights.

He has studied under great teachers who have been close to the source themselves, like Krishnamurti and Madame Jeanne de Salzmann and he illustrates his explanations here and there with inspiring little anecdotes from his recollections of their teachings.

The following passage in the book is about a topic I personally find very valuable: the kleshas, causes of suffering:

*Chapter II, sutra 10 & 11*

*These subtle kleshas can be overcome by reversing the natural flow and returning to the source.*

*Their effects can be reduced by meditation.*

*... Yoga is, as is all spiritual teaching, for making a connection with the source of life, therefore its movement is against the automatic flow of nature. As a fact of our human condition (as in the Christian doctrine of "original sin"), we are all heirs to the unrefined state of prakrita. To be transformed into a refined or sanskrita being requires art, skill, education – in other words, this transformation requires yoga.*

This is a book I can truly recommend. You won't need any other book for your spiritual development.

*Elleke van Kraalingen has been teaching yoga and meditation for 30 years according to the eight steps of the classical Raja Yoga of Patanjali. Together with*

*her husband, Pieter Hiemstra, she leads La Borde Blanque: a lovely Yoga and Meditation Retreat Centre in the middle of nature at the foothills of the Pyrenees in Southern France where they give all kinds of retreats and courses in yoga and meditation, as well as an International Raja Yoga Teacher Training (IYF). Trained as a psychologist and healer, she coaches people on their life path. As an author, she has written several books. [www.bordeblanque.com](http://www.bordeblanque.com)*

## PSYCHOLOGY- CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

### SELF, ENLIGHTENMENT AND GOD

David Lorimer

### ■ I – REALITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

David R. Hawkins MD, PhD

Hay House, 2003, 589  
pp., \$18.95, p/b – ISBN  
978-1-4019-4500-8

This is the most brilliant and extraordinary book I have read on the nature of subjective reality and the spiritual path. About three years ago, I reviewed a previous book by David Hawkins, *Power vs Force*, having been encouraged by friends to read it for nearly 10 years, and I found the book a revelation. This is the third in a trilogy, where the second volume is entitled *The Eye of the I*, and I bought it at the recent Beyond the Brain conference. The book mixes narrative text with answers to questions, and articulates essential spiritual themes with remarkable clarity and lucidity. An important item of background information is the calibration scale based on muscle testing developed by Hawkins, which effectively positions people, ideas and emotions on a scale of 1 to 1,000, although there are aspects of reality well beyond that. He explains that muscle testing provides a wormhole between linear and non-linear realms as well as giving instructions on its use. He also gives some background about his own spiritual development going back to early childhood and demonstrating direct insight into the states he later describes.

His distinction between linear and non-linear is a good place to start, as the ego and ordinary mind operate within a framework of form, duality, polarity and opposites while the nonlinear spiritual dimension, analogous in some ways to quantum physics, represents the formless, timeless and non-local. He explains that 'the source of the universe and all existence is an infinite potentiality that

is formless and innately Infinite Power. Out of the supreme Unmanifest arises the manifest universe as linear and non-linear realms. Form has locality and duration; that which is formless as nonlocal and outside time' (p xxxv). Later he adds that 'form includes the formless as its substrate and is not separate from it.'

The I of the title is the radical subjectivity of the state of Realisation or the manifestation of the Unmanifest as the Self. Critically, the Self becomes known by identity, by being it. Hence Hawkins's argument that God can be known but not proved, which distinguishes between the direct and immanent approach of the mystic and the dualistic approach of theology searching to find proofs of the existence of a transcendent God. However, the Self is its own message and truth can only be realised, not explained. Enlightenment is defined as the linear observed from the context of the nonlinear – this transcends the experienter, observer, witness and even awareness. '*Enlightenment is the revelation of the Self when the illusion of the reality of a separate self is removed.*' (my italics). In the ordinary state, the ego is the content, whereas God/Self is context, while 'the mystic knows, experiences and identifies the Self as both context and content, that is, context is the content. Science is the authority of a linear domain, while the mystic is the authority of the nonlinear domain.' (p. 202)

The Self/God is the source of consciousness and our own experience of subjectivity, and, paradoxically, consciousness is revealed as impersonal. Consciousness is defined as radical subjectivity that transcends personal identity. The process of witnessing removes the personal illusion of awareness. The Self is the source of life and the subjective awareness of existence and it can only love because that is its essence - love is not a quality of God but God's very essence, also implying Allness, Oneness and the illusion of separation, which is the basis of the ego. The Self is the ultimate teacher speaking through divinely inspired prophets in every age.

Hawkins explains that the powerful teacher can catalyse the transformation of information into subjective awareness. His or her aura is a carrier wave, so their teaching is on two levels as the carrier waver accompanies the teacher's words and is a quality of the Presence as Self. Hence, 'the true teacher does not identify with names or titles, for there is no person present'. This formulation is very similar to Beinsa Douno's statement that it is always God who teaches while the function of the Teacher or Master is to

act as an instrument and demonstration. In his own case, there is no name on his grave, only Love, Wisdom, Truth, Justice and Goodness.

Spiritual work is essentially letting go of attachments to thoughts, positions, opinions and memories, in other words deep surrender is the core in all pathways, whether of the heart, mind or action. This represents dying before we die, and the process is explained whereby 'everything has to be recognised, then released and surrendered as an impediment to the clarity of the unobstructed awareness of the Self. Attention should be focused on the process of letting go: 'surrender to God is surrender to the truth that nothing other than the Ultimate Reality is permanent – all that arises in form passes away.' (p. 292)

Just like the ego, our collective life is shot through with duality, opposites and blame rather than responsibility, but everything is interpreted from the position on the spectrum – kindness can seem a weakness at a lower level, and Hawkins explains the different roles of Luciferic and Satanic energies in relation to the higher and lower chakras. The media provides a good snapshot of collective consciousness by exploiting emotionality and sensationalism to elicit sentimentality, indignation and outrage - in fact this is an invitation to reactivity. An expanded context gives a more detached view, and the spiritual aspirant is encouraged to give up judgements, expectations and sensitivities. Indeed, the language Hawkins uses about himself is third person and without an immediate sense of agency. His sense of self includes context and content, and action originates from the entire field. Here he has very interesting points to make about linear causation, which tends to ignore the complex overall context in which everything arises. For Hawkins, there is only one consciousness, there is no distance or space to traverse. In addition, 'there is no doer of actions, the actions are the doer, actions and self are one and same'. (p. 223).

There is far more detail in the book than can be articulated in a relatively short review, but I hope I have conveyed some of the flavour and depth of insight with explanations of subjects that are usually hard to put into words. As a culture, we find it challenging to bridge the gap between 'the linear reasoning of the mind and the non-linear reality of spiritual truth', and are constantly trying to reduce the latter to the former, when deep understanding comes from the opposite direction where the linear is understood in terms of the nonlinear, and individual consciousness as an expression of the universal divine mind, which is also universal divine love. Serious seekers

will find their understanding of spiritual reality immeasurably enhanced as well as finding valuable advice and guidance on the essential spiritual work of a human incarnation.

## AN EXPANDING VIEW

David Lorimer

### ■ THE WILEY BLACKWELL HANDBOOK OF TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY

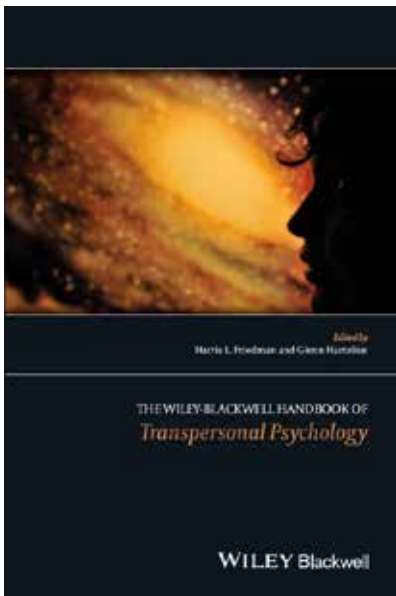
Edited by Harris L. Friedman and Glenn Hartelius

Wiley Blackwell, 2015, 706 pp., 39.60, p/b – ISBN 978-2-119-05029-2

In the last issue, I reviewed the *Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality* published in 2012 – this equally important Handbook was published a couple of years ago, and together they map the overall field very effectively as essential reading in the overall discipline of psychology, where the transpersonal approach has been neglected by the mainstream as inconsistent with its largely materialistic philosophical base. With over 50 authors and 38 chapters arranged in six parts, the volume is as comprehensive as feasible – there are introductions to transpersonal psychology, transpersonal theory, transpersonal methodologies, transpersonal experiences, transpersonal approaches to transformation, healing and wellness, and transpersonal studies. Readers can dip into individual sections, while serious students will want to study the whole volume with its extensive references.

The first part helpfully defines the field with a summary definition in the initial chapter: 'transpersonal psychology is a transformative psychology of the whole person in intimate relationship with a diverse, interconnected and evolving world; it pays special attention to self-expansive states as well as to spiritual, mystical, and other exceptional human experiences that gain meaning in such a context. (p. 14) Another helpful definition defines the field of study as phenomena beyond the ego as a context for an integrative/holistic psychology that in turn provides a framework for understanding and cultivating human transformation. The reader will note the emphasis on transformation, which is entirely absent from mainstream psychology courses based on an analytical and statistical Cartesian objectivity.

Mike Daniels provides an informative overview of the roots, history and



evolution of the transpersonal perspective, presenting his own model based on three vectors or metaphors of ascending, descending and extending, the last providing a social dimension. With my interest in metaphysical frames of reference and assumptions, I was drawn to the contribution by Harald Walach, who begins by stating bluntly that transpersonal psychology has had no structural impact on the mainstream. His own approach is to reinvent the transpersonal enterprise as a science and culture of consciousness, going back to William James and Franz Brentano. He provides a very useful characterisation of the third person mainstream approach, with an acute awareness of pervasive presuppositions (he goes back to RG Collingwood). He is fully aware of the problem of objectivism, and also of inner experience in relation to epistemology and indeed ontology. Resistance to expanding the materialistic frame is prevalent, he argues, because a paradigm and a theory is always stronger than data. His own proposal is a complementarist model of body mind interaction without arguing for the primacy of either consciousness or matter. This seems to me a promising approach.

The relationship of transpersonal psychology to the existing mainstream is a recurring theme within the volume, with some people, like the co-editor Harris Friedman, arguing that the only viable approach is empirical in terms of outer and inner senses. From this viewpoint, he is highly critical of the philosophical work of Wilber and Laszlo, which he sees as grand closed systems drawing on too many supernatural and metaphysical concepts. It is true that these are scientific-philosophical contributions, but at the same time they provide new frameworks within which scientific ideas can be

analysed. Moreover, as he himself admits, science cannot be free of underpinning philosophical assumptions. For him, science is an empirical endeavour limited to the study of the physical and natural, namely the phenomenal.

This means that he treats non-duality as a metaphysical concept, and I'm not sure that meditation researchers would agree, as the whole point is to try to correlate inner experience with empirical measurement. He advocates abandoning the focus on transcendence as non-scientific, and while this reduces the scope of transpersonal psychology, he sees this as unavoidable if it is to remain scientific. In addition, he regards it as a necessity for conceptualisation to postulate a Cartesian split between knower and known, which is precisely disputed by Jorge Ferrer and others putting forward a participatory approach, also featured in this volume. Friedman regards his middle range transpersonal psychology theory is consistent with William James's radical empiricism, which is the case if used epistemologically, although the deeper question is the relationship between epistemology and ontology - are there ontological realms beyond the physical? Many transpersonal psychologists, also in this volume, would answer in the affirmative.

For instance, Douglas MacDonald specifically addresses philosophical underpinnings of transpersonal psychology as a science, pointing out that the subscription of science to naturalism/materialism, rationality and linguistic/semiotic representationalism tends to reduce transpersonal phenomena such as spiritual experiences to biological mechanisms 'which simply do not conform or do justice to the real nature, quality, and significance of such phenomena' (p. 318) Wilber puts his finger on the essential issue when he writes that 'once you have translated the world into empirical measurements and numbers, you have a world without quality, guaranteed.' Other writers advocate a mixed method approach involving both quantitative and qualitative data. Macdonald himself questions whether ontological materialism is in fact a requirement for science, as proposed by sceptics writing on what they call pseudoscience.

In a shortish review, it is impossible to convey the full richness and diversity of content in this volume, but it is worth spelling out some of the themes covered with great authority. There are contributions by Stan Grof on his 50 years of transpersonal research, as well as on altered states of consciousness by Charley Tart. Alan Vaughan writes about the relationship between Jung

and transpersonal psychology, while Allan Combs describes the contribution of Ken Wilber. Les Lancaster examines neuroscience and the transpersonal, while the methodological section includes neurophenomenology. Transpersonal experiences are also comprehensively analysed, including psychedelics, NDEs, transpersonal sexual experiences and parapsychology. The extensive section on transformation and healing addresses mental health, meditation, somatic therapies, hypnosis, dreaming, expressive arts therapies and psychospiritual integrative practices. The final part on transpersonal studies covers such areas as eco-psychology, feminist psychology, transpersonal social engagement, transpersonal medicine, the arts and transpersonal education. Each of these is a rich seam and every informed reader will find their own focus and point of expansion in this volume summarising the field, with extensive further reading.

## AN AUTHORITATIVE ANTHOLOGY OF ALL THINGS AYAHUASCA

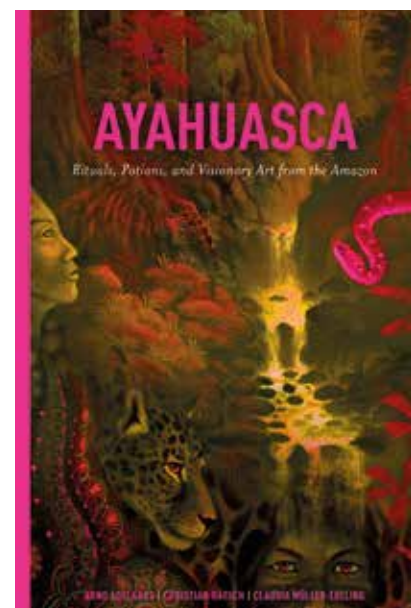
Oliver Robinson

### ■ AYAHUASCA: RITUALS, POTIONS AND VISIONARY ART FROM THE AMAZON

Arno Adelaars, Claudia Muller-Ebeling, Christian Ratsch

Divine Arts 2017, revised, updated edition, 310 pp., £18.97, p/b. ISBN-13: 978-1611250510

I was listening to BBC Radio 2 several days ago. It was about 5.30pm, which means about six million listeners. The comedian Simon Amstell came on the air to discuss his new book *Help*.



To my great surprise, he talked candidly about his journey to the Amazon to do a spiritual retreat that centred around ingesting the healing medicine ayahuasca. He discussed how through the rituals he experienced a feeling a deep connection with the universe, with the plant spirit that ayahuasca is said to channel, and how was given insights into how he unrepressed memories that had led to chronic depression. He described the retreat as a turning point in his life that healed his depression.

This review is not about Amstell's book, but I wanted to mention his conversation on Radio 2 because this was a clear sign for me that ayahuasca has irrefutably moved out of the fringes of culture towards the mainstream. This radical increase in popularity and acceptability holds much promise but also much risk, so a scholarly and informed take on ayahuasca is much needed. The book under review - *Ayahuasca: Rituals, Potions, and Visionary Art of the Amazon* - fills that need. It is a rich anthology about the history, botany, anthropology and psychology of ayahuasca.

Part 1 describes what ayahuasca is (a mix of ayahuasca liana combined with leaves from the Amazon that contain DMT), and discuss how it is turned into a drink including actual recipes. This part of the book also describes other sister medicines that work alongside ayahuasca as healing companions, including coca, tobacco (yes, tobacco is healing if not abused), and copal (incense).

Part 2 is an account of the visions within the ayahuasca journey, and the artistic depiction of ayahuasca experiences. The chapters in this part discuss the patterns, signs and signatures of these visions, including the meanings of zigzags, spirals, circles, crosses, and animal symbolism. It then discusses ayahuasca music, including that used by shamans, but also rock and electronic music that is inspired by ayahuasca (although not mentioned in the book, I recommend the album *Wake Up Now* as a great example of ayahuasca-inspired folk music). Finally, ayahuasca-inspired art from the jungle to the contemporary West is described and discussed from the perspective of an anthropological lens.

In Part 3, the rituals of ayahuasca are described from a participatory standpoint, including the spiritual and religious contexts of these rituals. The medium of song is described as central to all such rituals. Music functions within the rituals as a kind of moving platform to transport the participant into other levels of reality. Shamanic rituals stemming from Peru, Brazil, Ecuador and Columbia

are described, including interviews with shamans who work within different traditions. I love this description of the spiritual practice of taking ayahuasca, being contrasted here with the quietening inner techniques of the east:

“The Amazonian technique to stop the babbling and chattering inner voice, to silence the never-ending commentator, is not to go more and more quiet. No, it is to throw oneself into a hurricane, into the dizzying vortex created by the ayahuasca effect. That all-encompassing experience shuts down the commentator as well, replacing it with another voice, the voice of ayahuasca, the voice of the jungle. Here, wisdom comes from outside...by drinking ayahuasca it is possible to cross the border between life and death, to meet the ancestors, to encounter the source of life.” (p. 253)

The ayahuasca rituals of a number of South American churches are also described, including those of the Santo Daime church, which calls ayahuasca 'Daime'. Santo Daime has particular relevance for Europeans, as in the Netherlands ayahuasca is legal for religious purposes, which in turn means that ceremonies are usually anchored loosely in the Santo Daime tradition. It was through this Santo Daime styled Dutch tradition that I had my own experience of ayahuasca within a three-day workshop.

Westerners who have used ayahuasca are interviewed in the final section of the book, and the lurking pitfalls that sit in the interaction between Amazonian shamans and Western seekers are discussed. It describes the dangers of doing DIY ayahuasca ceremonies in the West without the shamanic holding space. To use my own metaphor on this matter, ayahuasca is like a rocket, and while it can help you to reach the stars or reach other planets, trying to launch a rocket in the wrong place and at the wrong time is highly unlikely to lead to good results. Certainly not in your back garden.

Despite the risks involved in working with ayahuasca, the three authors argue that it has universal significance for humankind, for, they argue, it reveals the true nature of reality to be far greater than which we experience in normal waking consciousness, and also it shows that death is not the end. It is an awakener.

This is a rich book, full of knowledge, deep understanding and wisdom from three authors who have endeavoured to make sense of ayahuasca from both the perspective of the indigenous tribes of the Amazon and also from Western

spirituality. If you are one such Westerner feeling drawn by the call of mother ayahuasca, when you go, take a copy of this book with you.

*Dr Oliver Robinson is Senior Lecturer at the University of Greenwich and author of the forthcoming book Paths Between Head and Heart: Exploring the Harmonies of Science and Spirituality (O Books, published summer 2018)*

## ANYTHING GOES?

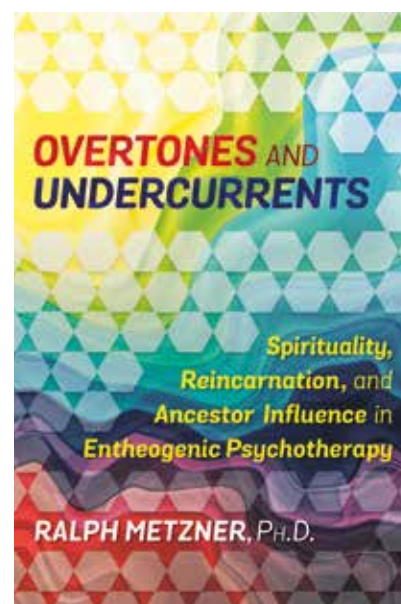
Gunnel Minnett

### ■ OVERTONES AND UNDERCURRENTS: SPIRITUALITY, REINCARNATION, AND ANCESTOR INFLUENCE IN ENTHEOGENIC PSYCHOTHERAPY

Ralph Metzner

Park Street Press, 2017, 192 pp., £12.99, p/b - ISBN-13: 978-1620556894, £12.99

I once met a very conventional psychiatrist (his words) who told the story of how he had come to use exorcism in his work. One of his patients, who was very difficult to help, had told him that he was possessed by demons who he needed to expel. When the patient asked the psychiatrist for help with this, he agreed, albeit after some hesitation, and started to follow the 'instructions' his patient gave him. To his surprise it worked. Having spent years trying to reach this patient in various ways, he suddenly made substantial progress without even knowing what he



had done. So he concluded that, even if he had no idea what he was doing or how it worked, it had had a positive effect. So, the psychiatrist realised that there might be other ways of working successfully with patients than the conventional methods he once had been taught.

I certainly agree that such an open-minded approach is good, in particular when it comes to understanding and working with the human psyche. The psychiatrist in this case was willing to accept being outside, both his comfort zone and conventional knowledge. He simply chose to be pragmatic. With sufficient caution, perhaps that is the best way forward.

In this book, Ralph Metzner gives an account of how he works as a transpersonal psychotherapist. He uses a spiritual approach, combined with unorthodox methods such as exorcism, shamanic rituals, dreamwork, past life, yogic life-fire exercises, visualization and meditation etc. Metzner, who worked with Tim Leary and Richard Alpert in their famous psychedelic research at Harvard University in the 1960's, also works with psychedelic, mind-expanding substances.

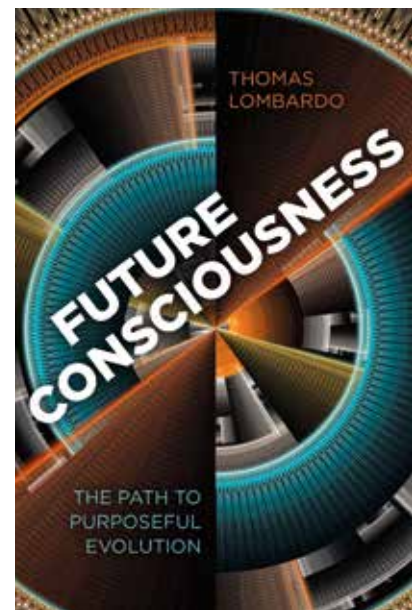
This book is mainly an account of how these various techniques can work and how they are explained by the indigenous people who developed them. The book describes colourful concepts such as how to find inner stillness, the Soul's journey to a human birth, family reconciliation, conversation with deceased ancestors and the Healing Wisdom of the Serpent.

To use such unorthodox methods is to get very close to religious, faith-based practices, which often serve as the starting point for cults. But, as with the psychiatrist who accepted exorcism, as long as it is recognised that this goes against conventional knowledge, this might still be just open-minded and creative. But unfortunately this book is a bit too far over the line in one-sidedly stating indigenous 'facts'. It fails to recognise that such practices can be highly questionable for mainstream psychotherapy and therefore require a more scientific 'western' explanation.

It should be said that in the introduction, Metzner, identifies the difference between his work and mainstream psychotherapy. But when he later makes statements about God and the eternal soul etc., he does not recognise that these are not indisputable facts according to the modern, science-based knowledge, which most people in the West regard as our most reliable source of knowledge.

It is not surprising perhaps that Metzner regards his views as so obvious and so generally accepted that he does not need to explain them further. He was after all involved in creating what has later been called the New Age movement. And undoubtedly the work that he, Tim Leary and Richard Alpert were involved in during the 1960s meant a great shift in and widening of our understanding of the human psyche. But we must also remember that, although the properly controlled work with psychedelic drugs in Harvard's research laboratories was very exciting, it also opened up for a culture of drug abuse that caused a lot of harm for a lot of people. And along similar lines, many of the indigenous philosophies that were adopted by New Age groups, were often not properly understood. Consequently, they were corrupted into ideas which charlatans used to develop their own New Age schools and teachings, aimed more at boosting egos and making people rich than at helping people in need of healing.

Of course, it can also be argued that Metzner simply is describing his line of work and therefore does not need to explain why others may find it unorthodox. But that kind of attitude sadly tends to add to the rather deep divide between established theories and New Age attitudes. This is a pity: it's throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Just as it's arrogant for New Age gurus to claim unquestionable knowledge and dismiss scientific evidence, the same applies in the opposite direction. There is always room for cross-pollination of ideas and practices. And also, from the client's perspective, a balanced approach that looks as much at understanding ancient traditions as modern knowledge of the human psyche. Such an eclectic approach can offer a more comprehensive approach to healing. Even if it involves admitting that we simply don't know enough to be able to speak with full certainty. From that perspective this book offers a detailed insight into the use of transpersonal psychotherapy and the positive use of mind-altering drugs.



## ECOLOGY-FUTURES STUDIES

### EVOLVING SELF AND SOCIETY

David Lorimer

#### ■ FUTURE CONSCIOUSNESS

Tom Lombardo (SMN)

Changemakers Books (John Hunt), 2017, 805 pp., £31.99, p/b – ISBN 978-1-78099-985-2

This sweeping magnum opus – subtitled 'the path to purposeful evolution' – integrates findings across science, technology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, ecology and futures studies to present an inspiring vision of the future based on individual embodiment of character virtues, principally wisdom. Lombardo states his core argument at the beginning of the book: 'we create a good future, defined as flourishing in the flow of evolution, through the heightening of future consciousness, which is achieved by developing a core set of character virtues, most notably and centrally wisdom'. He then elaborates on each of these in turn, emphasising that we are 'fundamentally dynamic, evolutionary, creative, and interactive beings embedded within this universe of possibilities. We exist within the evolutionary flow and evolutionary flow exists within us', and indeed has become conscious and potentially purposeful in humans.

In the first part, the author engages with the evolutionary and dynamic nature of reality and how this applies to human consciousness and society. He introduces the important concept of reciprocity, discussing this in relation to the line and

the circle, broadly representing Western linear and Oriental cyclical understandings in terms of complementarities including yin/yang, masculine/feminine, order/chaos, and stability/change within a systems view implying interdependence and interconnectedness. Later, we see how this broad distinction has interesting implications for contrasting uses of the term enlightenment in Western and Oriental thought. In the West, there is a striving towards individual autonomy through the use of reason and science, while the term in the East is associated with realising oneness and transcending the egocentric (pp. 539 ff.) These seem to be coming together in interesting ways.

Lombardo discusses the history of well-being, ethics and the good, then moves on to the Aristotelian idea of flourishing through virtue, placing this in a modern context through his definition of heightened future consciousness. Bringing this back to the individual level, he elaborates on the importance of self-control and self-responsibility, including the development of willpower, a frequently neglected topic. This brings him to the end of the first part with an exploration of the ecology of future consciousness and the affordances of the environment and society, including technology. He introduces the notion of the 'wise cyborg' based on the idea that humans are evolving with their technologies and are becoming increasingly urban animals. He quotes Ray Kurzweil, the apostle of Singularity, and I found his idea that we have always been functional syntheses of the biological and technological somewhat overstated, certainly in historical terms. Tools seem to me a different category than actually modifying the human to incorporate technology in the body, although I recognise that there are strong movements in that direction and that it is true to say that technology is both an extension and enhancement of human capacity (pp. 328 ff.) However, he does emphasise the importance of ethics in this domain and that technological evolution should be subsumed under ethical and psychosocial evolution (p. 336). Personally, I am also more cautious about the idea that biotechnology, pharmacology and high-tech medicine are steadily improving worldwide health and longevity, as other aspects of modern life directed by Big Food and Big Pharma are actually undermining our health in the interests of consumption and profit.

The second part explains the process of the heightening of holistic future consciousness by developing a core set of character virtues in terms of future-oriented psychological processes. There is a series of very informative chapters on emotion, motivation, purposeful

behaviour, learning, memory and habit, consciousness and understanding, thinking and imagination, and creativity. Then the last two chapters discuss the self and the personal narrative related to a grand narrative and the contemporary Wisdom Renaissance. Here, Lombardo reviews many perspectives on our mental and emotional lives, discussing both positive and negative aspects and the role of challenges in personal growth. He delves deep into these various topics, and has a useful consideration of the selective and interpretive nature of perception and understanding in terms of grand narratives and worldviews. Individually, there are recognised ways in which we can control and develop the flow of our own consciousness, while developing intellectual virtues through a future visioning process. Here, imagination and creativity are central and treated at length, while specific and appropriate virtues are elaborated in each chapter.

The author reviews many concepts of self, with an emphasis on self-reflectivity and evolving a holistic future consciousness and overall sense of purpose, relating the personal to the collective, also through a discussion of Damasio's theory of the autobiographical self. He provides a number of exercises in this respect to help readers develop their own ideal future personal narrative centred on the growth of wisdom and facilitating flourishing in the future for oneself and others. The chapter on wisdom provides the culmination of the argument as the 'highest expression of self-development and future consciousness' (p. 718). Importantly, wisdom is seen as evolutionary and dynamic, hence the phrase 'flourishing in the flow of evolution'; crucially, it unites knowledge and ethics in enacting future good. Lombardo spells out the virtues corresponding to balance, reaching towards what he calls a wisdom narrative, both individual and collective. Importantly, the priority of wisdom should also be applied to education, as suggested by Nicholas Maxwell and others.

The book envisages a New Enlightenment and an Age of Wisdom, which partly corresponds with the purpose of the International Futures Forum with which I have been involved since the early 2000s. One of our key people is Maureen O'Hara, whose work is cited here, especially her idea of the transformative self. The IFF has always prioritised praxis as joining theory or insight with action, and has been talking about a Second Enlightenment in the context of the 18th-century Scottish Enlightenment. It emphasises many of the same themes highlighted in this book such as handling uncertainty, the need to unite intuition

and reason, and the contextual nature of knowledge – it is perhaps humbler in asking the question how we can best operate in a world that we cannot fully understand or control, and the answers are sometimes very specific and pragmatic as well as small scale.

The sheer length of the book makes it a challenging read, but the narrative is very clear and the arguments well summarised as the book proceeds. The author's erudition is very considerable, but I missed a consideration of the work of Jung and allied figures like Erich Neumann and Mircea Eliade on the role of the unconscious, gnosis and initiation. Further discussion of the feminine (as in the work of Anne Baring) would also have been useful, and in especially in relation to science drawing on the work of scholars like Evelyn Fox Keller. The books of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan have a lot to offer on the East/West dialogue. Given the complexity and interweaving themes, it would have been extremely useful to have an index so as to cross-refer in different parts of the book. Having said all this, the book is an extraordinary achievement in its scope and vision, and in integrating a creative and evolutionary view of the future with the development of character virtues, especially wisdom. As such, it deserves the widest readership.

## FUTURE IMPERFECT

David Lorimer

### ■ RECLAIMING CIVILIZATION

Brendan Myers

Moon Books (John Hunt), 2017, 318 pp., £13.99, p/b – ISBN 978-1-78535-565-3

In this stimulating and wide-ranging study, Brendan Myers invites readers to consider the nature of civilisation, what is wrong with it and what can be done about it in a narrative that also includes pastoral interludes as well as contributions from his friends about absurdities and illusions associated with civilisation. One of the central paradoxes is that the word is on the one hand associated with monuments and cultural achievements, but also entails conquests, oppressions and widespread genocide.

In the first part, the author ranges widely in discussing views of civilisation, including the contributions of Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Albert Schweitzer and Kenneth Clark (Pitirim Sorokin is missing). The word itself is related to *civis*, or city, and also to citizen and by implication to walled cities that gave protection to those inside and defended the inhabitants from





attacks from the outside. This represents psychologically an in-group and an out-group, friends and enemies, us and them, the 'civilised' and the barbarian, self and other. The distinction also gives us a key to a dynamic of extending compassion and expanding the circle of empathy as criteria for the advance of civilisation. The author cites Schweitzer as having grasped the essence of civilisation most completely when he states that the ultimate object is the spiritual and moral perfecting of individuals through the development of virtues. Curiously, he makes no mention of Schweitzer's own ethic of reverence for life. There is also an interesting discussion of Rousseau and the state of nature, including that this concept is misguided and that one should speak rather of a pre-urban condition. And incidentally, 'civilised' can indicate a socially acquired skill which in some contexts leads to an artificial sense of superiority.

The second part asks what is wrong with civilisation once it has been established in terms of architecture, agriculture and a place of belonging after wanderers settled down. We all have to face the implications of violence, evil and death. Myers quotes Girard on the projection of evil and the paradox of violent measures taken to combat evil that are themselves violent. He sees the inevitability of death as giving rise to the need for the idea of soul, although he himself is agnostic about its existence - he focuses rather on the idea as a psychological coping mechanism while maintaining that we deceive ourselves with illusions. He mentions other social illusions such as that of higher and lower men, the virtuous prince, also bringing in suggestions from his friends such as that the president actually runs the country, people come to be successful solely on the basis of merit and that those who govern us are honest; also the devious enemy, which justifies a multitude of misguided policies. One could add that the propagation of fear is one of the most dangerous illusions, along with the adequacy of rationality and the illusion that humanity can dominate the Earth.

Recent events have shown how the liberal idea of civilisation and progress can be reversed by resurgent barbarism. I appreciated the thoughts quoted from

Jonathan Glover about our moral resources in terms of sympathy, respect and identity as the core of humanity contrasted with inhumanity. The author asks if there are new and better ways of facing reality and living flourishing lives, basing his argument on a number of negations such as impermanence, suffering, the nonexistence of a golden age and destiny. We have to loosen the power of the illusions he refers to and face what he calls the immensities with cautious optimism and the cultivation of empathy, cooperation and happiness. Some have tried to achieve this in small-scale communities while others - and this was not mentioned - plumbed the depths of culture at the series of Eranos meetings in Switzerland attended by Jung, Eliade, Kerenyi and other luminaries.

The author himself advocates virtue ethics, introducing a new term based on the Greek word for excellence - areteology. He categorises these in different contexts, beginning with a commitment to life and goodness, response and responsibility, wonder at the natural world, then the social virtues of care, courage, friendship, kindness and generosity; then integrity - oddly enough, Aristotle's own central virtue of practical wisdom or *phronesis* is missing, and a balance at the mean between extremes is surely critical for our time. His vision for society is a civilisation that deliberates, where thinking and talking replace fighting and killing, and it is indeed a source of optimism that we are already doing this in a number of respects. I found it a useful exercise to zoom out to consider the nature of civilisation, and agree with the author that a better world is indeed possible based on his idea of four lamps: human nature is sufficiently malleable for culture to change, even if slowly, we have made some progress in empathy, cooperation and compassion, we can find depth in life after casting away our illusions, and we can recognise and contribute to the progress that is already being made. At this dark time, it is useful to reflect on the case for optimism in relation to our future.

## BUILDING A WORLD WITHOUT WAR

David Lorimer

### THE BUSINESS PLAN FOR PEACE

Scilla Elworthy

Peace Direct, 2017, 184 pp., no price given - ISBN 978-1-9998164-0-7

Available on [www.scillaelworthy.com](http://www.scillaelworthy.com)

Scilla Elworthy has been nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize for her

work with the Oxford Research Group in developing effective dialogue between nuclear-weapons policymakers, scientists and military, and she has been an active peacemaker for decades. I imagine that many readers would like to contribute to peace building themselves, and this brilliant and strategic book spells out exactly how you can do this in the context of a continuing war economy based on mutual fear and threat. We can all step out of helplessness and apply our skills to the challenges we face and, in the words of Nelson Mandela, 'support courage where there is fear, foster agreement where there is conflict, and inspire hope where there is despair.' The book is in three parts: the problem of war, how war can be stopped, and who can do this and how. A key initial insight is that humiliation is a key driver of violence, and respect is the strongest antidote to humiliation and the fastest way of reducing a conflict; also that power is essentially human beings making decisions, and in that sense we can all exercise a degree of power.

The global interest in stopping war is in fact a no-brainer, even though we find it difficult because we are suffering from centuries of revenge, terrorism, floods of refugees, not to mention children maimed for life. Syria is perhaps a good example of intractability, where more than 470,000 people have been killed and 12 million people driven from their homes. All this violence is very expensive, totalling an estimated \$13.6 trillion in 2015 as compared with UN peacekeeping expenditures of \$8.27 billion in the same year - really an unanswerable argument for spending more on peace, all the more so since militarism cannot address future security threats in terms of climate change, migration, water shortage and inequality. Needless to say, the cost of addressing these issues is peanuts beside the annual \$2 trillion spent on war or preparing for war.

The psychological drivers of war are aggression, greed, fanaticism, ambition, fear or threat. Global military expenditure has increased by 64% in the period between 1999 and 2016, with annual global arms sales running at \$94.5 billion. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council are also the top five arms sellers, and it is an outrageous scandal that the UK has sold arms to 22 of 30 countries on its own human rights watch list since 2010 - notably to Saudi Arabia where UK arms were used to attack Yemen and create a severe humanitarian crisis. Hypocritically, sales approved to these countries are said to be 'essential for our security and prosperity' - they should have said that they help perpetuate a vicious cycle of inhumanity and insecurity. Underlying all this is the prevailing defence establishment narrative of security

through dominance, and it is revealing to learn that almost all these people are privately educated men advocating what Scilla calls a hardware rather than a software approach, which would involve 'dealing with people, developing trust, finding common ground.'

Encouragingly, though, we do know how to prevent war and resolve conflict, and there is good training available to develop the requisite skills, the most essential of which is mutual listening where inner power replaces domination power. This is all explained in the second part dealing with basic principles of dialogue, prevention and early intervention, strategies for building peace, and costing the business plan for peace. Critically, this involves intervening in the cycle of violence so that the anger generated by an atrocity does not lead to further revenge and retaliation. Scilla gives 25 diverse strategies, explaining the principle of each, giving an example, and how to plan for its replication. In a number of these, the role of women is crucial, in spite of the fact that 90% of negotiators and those in policy-making positions on peace and conflict are men. One proposal is for 2.5% tax on current annual arms sales, which would yield more than enough money to fund diverse peace initiatives, as costed in the next chapter. Here, she notes that political will is critical in order to pressure on ministers.

The business plan for peace is a first, and it is based on systems that effectively prevent conflict and build peace at local, national and international levels. Each component is explained and costed over a ten-year period, and the total is just under \$2 billion as compared with 2016 global military expenditure of \$1,686 billion! The essential new approach is understanding how safety and security involve preventing violence at source instead of waiting for conflict to break out. Government thinking is so narrowly and pragmatically based, that we the people have to take things into our own hands, and the third part of the book explains how. The rising generation is more familiar with the shift from me to we, representing the application of feminine intelligence and the bringing into balance of masculine and feminine principles. Scilla suggests many potential causes of action for readers to espouse at local, national and international levels, including supporting Simultaneous Policy - see my review of the recent book about this in Books in Brief.

In terms of skills, Scilla has learned from experience that inner work is a prerequisite for outer effectiveness, because the quality of our awareness directly affects the quality of results. This

means moving beyond self-righteousness, working with emotions and the shadow, and developing our capacity for deep listening. In an alchemical process, aggression can be replaced by presence and integrity. Scilla also gives good practical advice on taking a stand and concludes that 'the most powerful and lasting way to counter war and violence is to build a culture of peace', living together and celebrating differences, transforming society from the inside out. This remarkable book distils a lifetime of practical wisdom and provides readers with a comprehensive toolkit including the necessary figures to make the case for building a world beyond war while at the same time creating a truly sustainable society.

## GENERAL

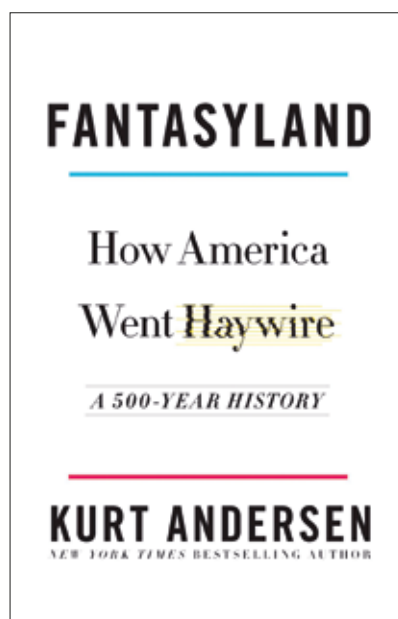
### REALITY AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

Martin Lockley

#### ■ FANTASYLAND: HOW AMERICA WENT HAYWIRE

Kurt Andersen

Random House, 2017, 462 pp., \$30.00, h/b – ISBN 978-1-4000-6721-3



Anyone looking at the present political situation in the USA will probably agree that the country has become increasing fantasy prone: i.e., divorced from reality. [Does consensus reality exist]? The second subtitle of Kurt Andersen's *Fantasyland* – "A 500-year history" – tells us that he views Americans as having been enamoured of fantastical dreams since around 1517 when European colonisation

of "America" first got underway. Canadian and Mexican culture is excluded from Andersen's scrutiny. The escapist fantasies so characteristic of what is now the USA have had many historical manifestations: the promise of heaven on Earth through the manifest destiny right to grab 'free' land, the get-rich-quick lure of "gold in them thar' hills" the rugged individual's conviction that they are little beholden to governance, taxation or social contract institutions. These wishful aspirations persist today and manifest in various bizarre cultural characteristics including extreme evangelism, libertarianism, Hollywood celebrity cults, plastic surgery, reality TV, and a president, majority party and a populace riddled with factions enamored of conspiracy theories and the promulgation of 'spin' that has spiraled out of control into fake news.

It may help us understand why Americans are different, and in their own eyes "special," if we recognise that 400-500 years ago there was "a kind of natural selection...[of]...people...willing to believe in advertising." That is, as Francis Bacon noted, colonisation was driven by "gold, silver and temporal profit" not the propagation of the Christian faith" [whatever those professing faith might claim]. These people were mostly protestant, with various often quirky, anti-establishment views. Andersen summarises the traditional view that the Puritans founded America, in search of religious freedom, by saying "America was founded by a nutty religious cult." Echoing ancient, Jewish tradition they saw America as the New Jerusalem, the New England, the promised land. Timing is everything, and ironically beginning in the 1600s 'Age of Reason' as Europe produced Shakespeare, Galileo, Bacon, Newton, Descartes, Hobbs, Locke, Spinoza, Kant and Voltaire "America was a primitive outlier" with a populace "free to believe whatever supernaturalism" they wished. Such freedom to think whatever you want, what Melville called insisting on "the universal application of a temporary feeling or opinion" would become "a credo of Fantasyland." Andersen often lauds such pro-European, pro-reason sentiments as an antidote to American delusions and various "Great delirium[s]" that arose from the creation of various cultish religious denominations.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as cowboys and cavalry decimated the remaining Native American cultures William Cody (Buffalo Bill) created his *Wild West Show*, the forerunner of the Hollywood western. So show business and the "fantasy-industrial complex" was created to sell "dreamy fabrications on a national scale" a "routine part of the American way." Between 1911 and 1919 movie releases increased from

2 to 646, 90% of which were American. Most famous Americans were no longer real politicians, writers, artists but rather actors “people renowned for pretending to be people they weren’t.” What more might we say about Hollywood’s role in fantasy generation? With Disneyland as perhaps its most iconic manifestation of dreams and fantasy “California is America squared.” For those who believe, as I do, that language betrays many an obvious and subtle cultural change, such phrases as *suspension of belief* speak to “discriminating between the actual and the unreal.” Words that conveyed skepticism like *hogwash*, *balderdash*, *humbug*, *bunkum*, *hokey*, *claptrap* and *malarkey* were used less and less while words like *incredible*, *unbelievable*, *unreal*, *fabulous* and *fantastic* no longer had derogatory or unrealistic connotations, but were instead terms of praise, similar to *wonderful*, *glorious* *outstanding* or *superb*.

Left-leaning liberals and progressives, labels used more widely in America than Europe, often for intelligent authors like Andersen, have a tendency to regard conservative, right-leaning, gun-toting, fundamentalist types as deluded deniers of reality. The trouble with such sweeping labels is that when applied by progressives to conservatives, the latter tend to be offended and they ‘double down’: meaning they become more entrenched in their right-leaning, anti-somebody culture and more inclined to believe that it is the other side – the left – that is conspiratorial and deluded. This emphasises the cultural divide and cultural wars phenomena so virulent in America today. Everybody seems inclined to anti-something-ideology, even if it is anti-negativity. Educated intellectuals - especially on campus - are mostly left-leaning, often labeling themselves as agnostic progressives. They mostly live in cities and well-to-do suburbs and consume progressive media. Residents of poor, rural areas, many inclined towards traditional fundamentalist or evangelical beliefs, live more isolated existences where extractive industries like coal are in decline, along with the infrastructure. They may feel forgotten, cheated and nostalgic for a lost past, a lost American dream world, or simply for more satisfying cultural experience, something city dwellers may equally well crave. Conservatives do not necessarily blame robber barons or wealth inequality.

The culprit may be amoral “progress” that has left them behind, and who but progressives are to blame, especially if conservative politicians or atheist-fearing preachers stir fear by pointing the finger to the left. Andersen reminds us that religious historian George Marsden famously said “A fundamentalist is an evangelist who is angry about something.” The

extreme right, including the National Rifle Association, points the fingers at the press and intellectuals, forgetting that the truly world shaking stories of cultural sea change have not popped up in the 24-hour news cycle, but have rather taken years of dogged investigative research and changing generational awareness to bring to light.

The previous paragraph paraphrases Andersen’s thesis rather than quoting snippets directly. It is underpinned by the sentiment that discernment and education avoids the most deluded departures from reality. This thesis, and the evidence that Google searches increasingly bring up more and more conspiratorial fake news is consistent with the arguments put forth in *Head in the Cloud* (reviewed in *Network 12x*) that in a very complex world we need to be educated and contextually savvy. I was interested to learn of a study that “the single strongest driver of conspiracy belief to be the belief in end time prophecies.” [I once witnessed two supermarket employees tell each other, in all earnestness, that they would be among the ~140,000 Christians to be beamed up in the forthcoming rapture, as the world ended! Have such fantasy beliefs become what we might call a sociological reality]? Thomas Jefferson once said that in the New United States “reason is left free to combat” every sort of “error of opinion.” He was evidently a left-leaning optimist.

Andersen opines that “Europeans had highly developed regional and national societies before they bolted on Protestantism. America on the other hand was half created by protest extremists...” This is a cogent historical perspective, and flattering for Europeans. One must agree that American politics is riddled with questionable Protestant ideology, but I depart from Andersen when he throws out the baby with the bathwater. He repeatedly dismisses homeopathy as new age nonsense and gives short shrift to the Gaia hypothesis. [I would argue, though my audience is much smaller than Andersen’s, that he has gone too far in dismissing what he categorises as “supernatural” versus “natural” phenomena. In a topsy-turvy world undergoing a sea change, it is true that things often make little sense, and that fantasy delusion should be called out. I may be wrong, but, as Jean Gebser argued, the magical and mythical consciousness structures may erupt at any time within the rational world. This is how new, unexpected paradigms emerge. SMN members often lament extreme reductionist scientism, but hopefully discriminate between fruitful and dead end pathways]. SMN members may also take issue with Andersen’s suggestion that “the supply of clinical psychologists,

caregivers desperate to find the source of their clients’ unhappiness tripled from the mid 1970s to 1990,” somehow marks a descent into fantasyland. There are many reasons for such shifts in clinical emphasis. Psychology is an inherently-dynamic, evolving field attempting to make sense of subtle energy influences on the psyche in human behavioral-cultural, not “supernatural,” contexts.

Andersen’s book deals competently with the cultural, socio-political, economic and political history of the USA, certainly topical subjects, reminding Americans that they too often live where the lines between fantasy and reality are blurred, and often tinged with whacky religious dogma. While he is right to point to these environmental influences on the shaping of the American cultural landscape into the fantasy-industrial complex, and the danger of letting fake news dull our sensitivity to the value of truth, there are [I believe] more fundamental forces at work. Admittedly these are broadly defined as psyche, the evolution of consciousness, humankind’s perennial search for spiritual meaning (Americans say the inalienable right to pursue happiness). They say one cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs. William Irwin Thompson, who spoke of “post religious spirituality,” also once said a shift in consciousness may herald a dark age. Certainly by definition, new light illuminates previously shadowy areas. Gebser spoke of integral consciousness integrating all consciousness structures (magical, mythical etc.,) in order to arrive at transparency. One way to realise a newly transparent reality paradigm is to dismantle the old, perhaps by exorcising fantasy (Jefferson’s “error”) and tackling the fake news and vested interests of the conspiratorial old guard and the wishful delusions of new age prophets head on. If you want secure ground, stick with the perennial Buddhist philosophy that all things change: that is “reality ain’t what it used to be” and likely never was!



## KNOW THE CLOUD OVER YOUR HEAD

Martin Lockley

### ■ HEAD IN THE CLOUD: WHY KNOWING THINGS STILL MATTERS WHEN FACTS ARE SO EASY TO LOOK UP

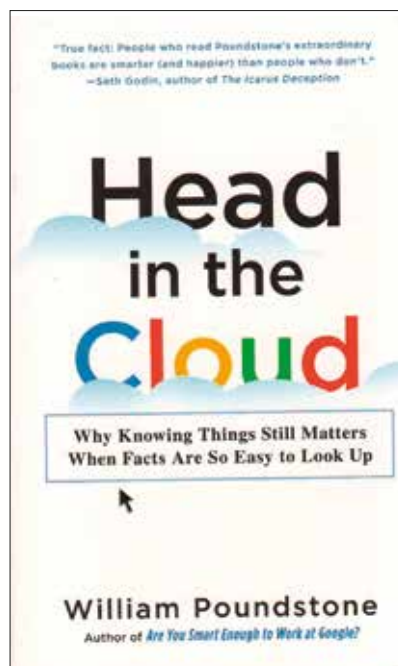
William Poundstone

Bay Back Books / Little Brown  
and Co., 2016, xx pp., \$7.99 p/b  
ISBN 978-0-316-55327-8

Poundstone, a Los Angeles writer, has summarised his main thesis quite succinctly in his subtitle: being knowledgeable (educated) still matters. Ironically, this concern arises at a time when everyone potentially has vast knowledge at their fingertips, but, sadly, many lack the ability to filter and assimilate it into their brains, or should I say “own it” intelligently as mature, discriminating individuals. The problem is twofold: first, the focus of this book, is the problem that those who think they know most, generally know least, and vice versa. Ironic? So if you are a modest sage who says the more I learn the less I know, you in fact know much more than most. Second: if you don't know enough to discriminate – know what you know – you are much more vulnerable to fake news. Put another way you may know something or think you know many things when ‘in fact’ they may be quite bogus. Here I cannot resist one of my favorite quotes: “Some people like to drink at the fountain of knowledge, others just like to gargle.”

SMN members might appreciate knowing that Poundstone's thesis is based on multiple surveys of the popular types often used by psychologists. Such surveys help reassure those like Poundstone that their information is “fact-based” and rationally underpinned rather than a product of fake news. [Wasn't it once called propaganda]? How much of a problem the fake v. fact culture war is in Europe rather than in America, Russia or elsewhere is a matter of debate, and on an individual level mediated by that nuanced faculty, the “discrimination” of the beholder. But regardless of how knowledgeable the average citizen is in different nations, fake news and spin is a global issue, symptomatic of a sea change in the entire global media infrastructure. This is tackled, especially in the American context by Kurt Anderson in his book *Fantasyland* (also reviewed for SMN).

But back to what Poundstone has to say. Now that news of the Berlin wall is “history” we have all heard of the proposed Mexican border wall.



Who is in favour of it besides President humpty Trumpty? Well it turns out that “the more factual questions a person answered correctly, the *less* likely they were to favour a border fence” (original italics). This was regardless of age or education level. We can all chuckle at extreme examples of ignorance, American or otherwise: the student who despite having taken an astronomy class did not know how many moons orbited the Earth. Such ignorance might be rectified if this individual had to go and work for NASA, but the ignorance of the general populace on matters of history, politics and demography has significant influence on important policy decisions surrounding social justice and governance.

Surveys show that Americans think Muslims make up 15% of the US population when in fact the real figure is about 1%. Hungarians also estimated “about 70 times too high.” If you relied on the estimates of the general American public (that their population is 25% Latino, 23% black, 13% Asian, 11% gay and 15% Muslim) that would, before overlap, add up to a whopping 87%. In reality about two thirds of the American population is white and more than three quarters (78%) are Christians even though the man and woman in street think that number is only 56%. Poundstone anticipates the sentiments in Anderson's book *Fantasyland* when he says that such “delusional demographics might be funny” if they did not “influence attitudes and policy in reality” and the “narrative that straight white, native born Christians are an endangered species – and ...every ‘Seasons Greetings’ card...a war on Christmas...”

or that 32% of their compatriots were unemployed when the real figure was 6%, [and declining].

America in particular is peculiarly enamoured of Fantasyland conspiracy theories, fearing that, according to popular opinion, it gives away 27% of its budget in foreign aid. The real figure is less than 1%. [Just recently Trump was in Vietnam, ironically complaining that America was not getting a fair deal! After all the USA did give away a lot during the Vietnam war (7 million tons of bombs, compared with 2 million in all of World War II)! But recognising irony, the dangers of hypocrisy or the need for diplomacy, truth and reconciliation are hardly the strong suits of the fact-free crowd! A groundswell of Americans ‘believe’ their own government is dangerously socialist-leaning, conspiring against them [and should be reduced to the size where it can be “drowned in a bath tub”]. Yet this same public is 70-81% in favour of the government programmes (Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security) they need to survive and that are part of the traditional, long-standing tax-supported social contract. [Let's spare SMN readers anything on health care and pharmaceuticals!]

Sadly, it is not just individuals or mobs of individuals who are ignorant, highly inconsistent and politically knee-jerk in their arguments, many state and national governmental agencies are now equally skewed and conspiratorial. The Texas State Board of Education requires that history books give equal emphasis to the inaugural speeches of Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, and down play the role of Thomas Jefferson in the nation's founding “That would be the Jefferson that Jefferson Davis was named after” Poundstone wryly notes! The same board proposed, unsuccessfully, that “textbooks always give Barack Obama's middle name, Hussein.” [Did they want one less Christian president and instead a fake Muslim leader]?! Whew!

As Poundstone concludes, his book makes the case that “knowledge that is general, contextual and even superficial appears to useful in unexpected ways... Those who can put a word or phrase to a topic understand that there is a body of knowledge they lack... A broad lifelong education” fosters “wealth and health” and “shapes our intuitions and imaginations” connecting us fruitfully with other individuals and cultures, helping “make us wiser citizens and supply[ing] the underrated gift of humility – for only the knowledgeable can appreciate how much they don't know.”

Poundstone's book title reference to the "cloud" is an obvious computer metaphor, but conceptually useful when thought of figuratively as the cloud of information hanging over our heads. It is not always easy to navigate through such clouds, and just as you cannot Google how to become an instant bad weather airline pilot, or brain surgeon, it requires a certain intrinsic knowledge to know what you can reasonably expect to know, find or do. Perhaps you don't know something and wish to Google it. This does not mean you are not knowledgeable. You may already be working on something profound and wish to follow up an important thread.

You cannot do this if you do not already have the contextual word, phrase or concept in mind: i.e., if you don't have a clue. So you already know what you ought to look up. And that is "the one thing you can't Google... what you ought to be looking up." If your own knowledge provides the clue, key or 'link' in computer vocabulary, to your desired destination, well and good. If you find a fake answer, your general knowledge is more likely to alert you to the unwanted diversion, and you may veer away [perhaps giving new meaning to an old Rolling Stones lyric: "Hey, Hey, You, You, get off of my cloud"].

Poundstone's book raises some obvious concerns about the information culture that surrounds us and how to navigate it. "Wiser citizens" may navigate successfully without sticking their heads or cursors in the information cloud unnecessarily. But as this book, and others concerned about fake news, and garglers at the fountain of knowledge attests, we have to deal with those who think they know what we know they don't know. The remedy seems to be quite traditional. Education and discernment are useful and make for wisdom. Fundamentally there is nothing much new under the sun, where ominous storm clouds may appear at any time.

© Stephen Wright





*David Lorimer*

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

# Books in Brief

## SCIENCE- PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

### ■ The Quotable Darwin

Edited by Janet Browne

Princeton University Press 2017,  
348 pp., \$24.95, h/b.

Janet Browne is the Professor of the History of Science at Harvard, and author of an acclaimed two volume biography of Darwin. Hence she is the ideal person to compile this selection, using his own words and those of his correspondents. The book is divided into six parts: early life and voyage of the Beagle, marriage and scientific work, origin of species, mankind, on himself, and friends and family. This enables the reader to follow through emerging themes and look in more detail at more specific issues raised by his work. As one would expect, there is a very long index entry on Alfred Russel Wallace with correspondence in both directions. Following an extract defining thought as a secretion of the brain and wondering how it should be more wonderful than gravity as a property of matter, Darwin (ironically) considers in great detail the arguments for and against marriage - he does marry his cousin Emma Wedgwood. They have 10 children, and she provides a sensitive foil for his classificatory type of mind.

There is an interesting section on responses to the *Origin of Species*, and I was struck by John Stuart Mill defending Darwin against violating the rules of induction. He observes that induction is concerned with the condition of proof, while 'Mr Darwin has never pretended that his doctrine was proved' as he is bound rather by the rules of hypotheses - which in his view 'have seldom been more completely fulfilled.' Presciently, he adds that Darwin has 'opened a path of enquiry full of promise, the results of which none can foresee.' Some readers may already be familiar with the way Darwin described the change in the functioning of his mind. In his youth, he enjoyed poetry but was later unable to read a single line, having

also lost any taste for pictures or music. Rather, his mind 'seems to have become a kind of machine for grinding general laws or large collections of facts' to the detriment of his own enjoyment. One final and I think significant observation: in an address in 1908 at the Linnean Society to commemorate the 50th anniversary of their joint discovery of natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace remarks on the striking parallel that they were both ardent beetle hunters in their youth. He adds that the collector is impressed by the 'almost infinite number of its specific forms, the endless modifications of structure, shape, colour and surface markings that distinguish them from each other, and their innumerable adaptations to diverse environments.' He attributes enormous importance to this parallel in terms of generating the theory of natural selection. As a whole, the volume gives a fascinating and accessible insight into Darwin and his work.

### ■ Genes, Determinism and God

Denis Alexander

Cambridge 2017, 385 pp., £26.99, p/b.

In this magisterial elaboration of his St Andrews Gifford Lectures, Denis Alexander critically explores the implications of advances in developmental biology and genetics for the dichotomous debate between nature and nurture. With his background as a research scientist and a specialist in the science/religion interface - he is the founding director of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge - Denis is ideally placed to cover this field and consider emerging understandings of the human person. After an initial highly informative historical background, he examines in detail how contemporary biology is changing our landscape of ideas in a series of chapters covering the main developments and their implications for understanding behaviour. The picture that emerges is one of complex integration that defies journalistic simplification in locating single genes as determinants of behaviour or opinion - a much more nuanced view is required, which he himself elaborates within his own theoretical framework. It is hard to isolate single factors from a complex integrated system.

Denis applies his thinking to the vexed question of free will, defining it as 'the ability to intentionally choose between courses of action in ways that make us responsible for what we do.' In a later chapter, he gives a very interesting example using Daniel Kahneman's System 2 - the deliberative system, applied to a complex issue involving a free vote in Parliament, where it is clear that each member would have the option to vote either way, depending on their own thinking and background. Towards the end, there are sophisticated chapters on the use of genetics in the legal system, as also applied to responsibility; then the hard philosophical issues of causality and freedom already referred to (from a viewpoint of non-reductive physicalism), and finally a chapter at the interface between theology and genetics, discussing the human person as the image of God. All in all, this is a remarkable and highly informative overview.

### ■ The Believing Scientist

Stephen M. Barr

Eerdmans 2016, 226 pp., \$25, p/b.

Stephen Barr writes as a theoretical physicist and Catholic about a wide range of issues in science and religion, drawing on his extensive work over the past decades. His first chapter retells the story of science, questioning the conflict thesis and suggesting that the real tension is between religion and materialism. He reminds us that Galileo and Newton overturned the naturalistic theories of Aristotle, arguing that naturalism has a place in the physical and biological sciences, but not so far as the ultimate nature of the human being is concerned - especially as materialism finds it hard to account for consciousness and free will. He then outlines the materialist story of science, which he argues has been overtaken largely by science itself during the 20th century. Themes include cosmology, mechanistic thinking, the dethronement of man, and determinism. There are 26 essays in all, covering evolution, mind, cosmology, reductionism, science as a substitute for religion as well as finding truth through science and what he calls mischievous myths about scientific revolutionaries. There are some stimulating reviews of highly influential books by the likes of EO Wilson, Richard Dawkins, Stephen Jay Gould, Michael Behe and Thomas Nagel. Not all readers will share the author's theological perspective, for instance on divine providence, but he is exceptionally well informed in the field.

### ■ Measures of Genius

Alan Durden

Bramber Press 2014, 491 pp., £14.99, p/b.

A fascinating book about scientists who gave their name to units of measure, while also introducing the reader to the whole history of measurement, including Roman formulations, the invention of the clock by Huygens in 1566 and the origins of the metric system and its connection with the French Revolution. The previous system was pretty chaotic, with different measurements for the French yard depending on which city you lived in. Most readers will not perhaps have realised that our temperature systems derive from Daniel Fahrenheit and Anders Celsius with their parameters of freezing temperature of salt water (0F), fresh water, human body temperature and boiling point at sea level. The other scientists covered in chronological order are: Pascal, Newton, Watt, Coulomb, Volta, Ampere, Ohm, Faraday, Joule, Kelvin, Clerk Maxwell and Tesla. The approach is informatively biographical and brings in many other contributing scientists - for instance, the role of Edison in trying to resist the competing invention of Tesla. The book is a significant and highly readable contribution to the history of science.

### ■ The Night Sky - Soul and Cosmos

Richard Grossinger

North Atlantic Books 2014, 805 pp., \$29.95, p/b.

The first edition of this epic study dates back to 1982, well before I met the author in the late 1990s. It undertakes the daunting task of reviewing the history of Western astronomy, the nature of planets and moons, then an expansive section on mythologies and legends, even covering flying saucers, crop circles and extra-terrestrial life. The key to the book is its scope and history of external and internal stargazing, which necessarily involves consciousness - also the proposition that every cosmology is essentially a mythology. The irony of the scientific, anthropocentric point of view (p. 344) is that it devalues 'the very thing that All That Is has spent trillions of light-years incubating - individually witnessed experience.' Astrology is discussed as a millennial, archetypal or traditional science, like alchemy, which is a science in the etymological sense of a system of knowledge - and of course incompatible with what we call modern science, which accounts for many of the hostile reviews of earlier editions. These people should also remember that without mind, there is literally no universe (p. 730), and our job is to bring inner and outer together, at least on our own journey.

## HEALTH-MEDICINE

### ■ Why We Sleep

Matthew Walker

Allen Lane 2017, 360 pp., £20, h/b.

Subtitled 'the new science of sleep and dreams' this book by the Professor of Neuroscience and Psychology and Director of the Sleep and Neuroimaging Laboratory at UC Berkeley is essential reading for anyone who sleeps, summarising as it does 20 years of cutting-edge research on the subject and spelling out the extraordinary implications for our health of not getting a regular eight hours sleep at night. Apparently, two-thirds of adults throughout developed nations fail to sleep the recommended eight hours; routinely sleeping less than six or seven hours undermines your immune system, promotes high blood pressure, doubles your risk of cancer as well as increasing your susceptibility to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and Alzheimer's. Just this list explains why this book is such an important read and makes the reader highly aware of the extensive health implications of sleep. The four parts cover the nature and history of sleep, why we need to sleep, how and why we dream, and sleeping disorders.

In a short review, I can only highlight a few points. The half life of caffeine in the system is 7-8 hours, and it operates by attaching onto adenosine receptors, which regulate sleep pressure. From an evolutionary point of view, we are designed for biphasic sleep, hence the rationale of the siesta, in which context the author cites an extraordinary study of 23,000 Greek adults demonstrating the health hazards of giving it up. Reading from a screen as opposed to a book late at night blocked the rising melatonin release by 50% in a controlled trial. Dolphins sleep with only one half of the brain at time. Sleep deprived mice showed a 200% increase in the speed and size of cancer growth relative to the well-rested group, with obvious implications for humans. Alcohol impairs REM sleep as well as fragmenting sleep more generally - bad news, even for moderate drinkers, especially as the quality of deep sleep diminishes as one ages. Early starts at school to suit hard-working parents is very bad news for children and their performance, so much so there is experimental evidence of significant increases in SAT performance for students starting an hour later (an adolescent getting up at 6 AM is equivalent to an adult rising at 4 AM). Towards the end of the book, the author gives plenty of implementable advice at a number of levels, the most important of which is to stick to a sleep schedule of between eight and nine hours a night - as I said at the beginning, this book really is essential reading for anyone who sleeps and wishes to maintain good health.

■ **The Psychology of Overeating**

Kima Cargill

Bloomsbury 2017, 198 pp., £21.99, p/b.

This is a fascinating and important book that makes the connection between food and the culture of consumerism. In the introduction, Cargill maps the complex determinants of overeating into various categories with sub-branches: economic and cultural, including consumerism and various food industry practices; biological, with our taste for sweetness and research based on neuroendocrinology; and psychological, especially in terms of defences. She uses as a framework of five understandings of consumerism developed by Gabriel and Lang: consumerism as a moral doctrine, as a political ideology, as an economic ideology for global development, as a social ideology and as a social movement. The overall context is the rise of consumer culture, originally in the US, leading to global hyper-consumption and production but also with its own psychopathology corresponding to the empty self to be filled with consumer goods. An interesting factor was the shift from thrift to anti-thrift aka credit, or rather debt, which drives our obsession with economic growth; then there is the rise of overeating itself since around 1960.

The next chapter is devoted to the psychological effects of consumer culture with limitless desires, and supply creating its own demand through advertising. More than 50% of the Planet's resources ever consumed have been since 1945. A huge research effort goes into the development by food scientists of ultra-processed (hyperpalatable) food and its key components of sugar, salt and fat, as well as identifying bliss points that can tip people into addiction and keep the tills ringing in what is a very competitive market. This is all enhanced by sophisticated psychological manipulation and neuromarketing to maximise 'hedonic reward', itself based on neurochemical findings. Sugar and fizzy drinks are covered, as is the search for new lifestyle markets, for instance among seniors.

Eating disorders such as binge eating have entered the DSM, which the author interprets as a form of cultural psychopathology related to disease mongering, overdiagnosis and overtreatment. This brings her to the symbiosis between Big Food and Big Pharma, who supply each other with demand, as illustrated in a neat figure (p. 119) where Food Industry sells hyperpalatable foods > binge eating > DSM codifies disorder > American Psychiatric Associations sells DSM > Big Pharma sells pills and back round the cycle. She cites the term phamergering markets to identify where

Big Food and Big Pharma are focusing their efforts – on the emerging middle classes in places like China and India. The book then considers the shortcomings of the regulatory system before concluding on a note of hope that there are various Slow movements emerging to counter consumerism and with a more balanced approach to well-being and less overall impact on the planet.

■ **Healing for Body, Soul and Spirit**

Dr Michael Evans (SMN)

Floris Books 2017 (1992), 191 pp., £16.99, p/b.

This revised and expanded edition is a comprehensive introduction to Anthroposophic Medicine by a physician with a lifetime's experience. The introduction makes clear that this approach is an extension beyond allopathic medicine to incorporate a missing spiritual dimension and therefore postulates subtler aspects to the human being with corresponding vehicles - physical, life, soul and spirit. Each of these aspects is explained in greater detail along with the physiological classification of metabolic – limb, nerve – sense and rhythmic systems. Correspondingly, imbalances occur if either anabolic or catabolic processes predominate. There are then chapters on medicines and various forms of therapy - including artistic - and an explanation of the important role of inner development as well as applications to psychiatry and immunity, including the genesis of cancer and its relation to formative forces. Practitioners will find the resource section useful, which also includes sample therapeutic communities.

■ **Psycho-spiritual Care in Health Care Practice**

Edited by Guy Harrison

Jessica Kingsley 2017, 208 pp., £18.99, p/b.

This is an important book for therapists and anyone engaged in psycho-spiritual care within a health context. The author is head of spiritual and pastoral care at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Director of the Oxford Centre for Spirituality and Well-being. At a time when spirituality represents a quest for meaning and connection, it is important to make space for this within a therapeutic context, all the more so since the approach is holistic. The first part reports on the editor's own research using an autoethnographic approach with an emphasis on liminality, relationality and healing. The second part widens out into contributions from other practitioners, with a number of short responses.

The clinical framework is crucial, and is reflected in professional use of language. Fortunately, we are moving away from models pathologising spirituality, but there are nevertheless borderlines involved. The editor advocates what he calls Radical Presence, defined as the integration of contemporary spirituality with practical theological or pastoral insights and an applied model of person-centred counselling and psychotherapy - thus Carl Rogers is an important influence, as is Martin Buber with his key insight distinguishing I-Thou from I-It relationships. All this helps to create a more open, informed and sympathetic clinical space.

■ **Governing Global Health**

Chelsea Clinton and Devi Sridhar

Oxford 2017, 282 pp., £16.99, h/b.

As the title implies, this informative book is about the governance of global health, with a particular analysis of the four largest players, the World Bank, the WHO, and the public-private partnerships of the Global Fund to Fight Aids, TB and Malaria, and the Gavi vaccination partnership. The first two represent older style institutions, while the latter embody a new partnership approach. In both cases there are issues around input and output legitimacy and a more general insistence on an approach involving measurement and results. As many readers will be aware, the Gates Foundation is a major player in global health promotion. The overall analysis is shaped by principal – agent theory concerning the relationship between member states and international organisations. There are informative chapters on governance and funding, and the authors summarise major health challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> century in terms of prevention, management and treatment of non-communicative diseases (NCDs), universal health coverage and pandemic preparedness. Even over the last 20 years, there has been a considerable shift so that globally NCDs now account for 55% of years lost to early death, disability and ill-health - a sign of the pervasive and encroaching impact of what is referred to as the diseases of civilisation.

■ **Connection**

Michael Lingard (SMN)

Self-published 2017, 109 pp., no price given, p/b.  
([www.totalhealthmatters.co.uk](http://www.totalhealthmatters.co.uk))

This personal book advocates a balance of holism with the prevailing reductionist approach applied to medicine and health. As the title suggests, it looks at various forms of connection – body, food, breath, mind, life, environment and cosmos. This involves posture, lifestyle and diet and their relation to various diseases, the contention



that overbreathing makes you ill (based on the findings of Buteyko), neuroplasticity and the development of the mind, the fundamental nature of health drawing on the Peckham Experiment, various environmental challenges, and how we fit into the larger cosmic picture. It is very much the conclusions of reflection and reading over many decades, and as such a personal viewpoint driven by a passion for the fundamentals of health and the need for personal responsibility.

## PHILOSOPHY-RELIGION

### ■ Simone Weil and Continental Philosophy

Edited by A. Rebecca Rozelle-Stone

Rowman and Littlefield 2017, 261 pp., \$135, h/b. Ebook available for \$42.50.

Simone Weil (1909-1943) was an extraordinarily brilliant and original thinker who died at an early age during the Second World War, having lived a life of unusual intensity. I have many of her books on my shelf, some in French. This informative and stimulating volume is divided into three parts: transcendental and embodied crossings, attentive ethics, and emancipatory politics, with four essays in each section. Philip Goodchild reminds us that, for Weil, philosophy is grounded in life, not thought, so the object is not knowledge but transformation through attention to experience enabling us better to navigate the tensions of life. One of her metaphors for becoming and being is that of a sailor in a boat, and it is disconcerting to read how the metaphor literally capsizes in her later work. The rudder of reason and moral self-determination is no longer sufficient, and she feels we are now like shipwrecked people clinging to logs on the sea and tossed passively by every movement, while God throws a rope down from on high. As Goodchild observes, the moral will is replaced by consent, and work by attention. Attention is in fact a central theme throughout her work along with waiting (*attendre*) and listening (*entendre*).

There are many rich seams for reflection throughout the volume, for instance our relationship to time as reconciling necessity and freedom – its passage subjects us to necessity, while our orientation is an expression of freedom. A comparative essay with Nicholas Berdyaev focuses on their different interpretations of the creative act, which for Berdyaev is a response to the creative act of God, while for Weil it is a matter of what she calls decreation, analogous to God withdrawing from the world in the process of surrendering and therefore destroying the I. Moreover, she asks what creative act is possible when

beset by affliction. Incidentally, her thought is enormously influenced by the Greeks. A further theme emerges in a chapter comparing Levinas and Weil on ethics after Auschwitz – both were concerned with facing reality and the necessity of self responsibility. Another essay discusses the relationship between compassion and sharing of attention, followed by a contribution on the problem of fatigue, something I have never seen systematically discussed before. A critical theme in the third part is the nature of oppression in relation to power seeking, and it is interesting to reflect on new ways in which we are not only liberated but oppressed by technology and technocratic power, characterised by what Lissa McCullough calls the FIMSPLIT complex underpinning neoliberalism and standing for financial – industrial – military – surveillance – propagandising – legislative – incarceration – terror. One comes away from this volume with a greater sensibility and awareness of Weil's intensely acute and at times agonising engagement with life.

### ■ Get Over Yourself – Nietzsche for our Times

Patrick West

Imprint Academic 2017, £9.95, p/b.

As the subtitle indicates, this book is not just another introduction to Nietzsche, but rather a thought experiment in how he would respond to our digital era of identity politics, therapy culture, religious fundamentalism and envy politics. His influence on leading 20th-century thinkers has been immense, and the author characterises him as a prophet of moral revolution advocating the destruction of everything decadent and life-negating while preaching liberation, originality, reinvention and self-creation. Everywhere he challenged prejudices and received opinions, urging us to transcend ourselves and live dangerously. The first chapter gives an account of his life, which is followed by a series of chapters identifying and criticising contemporary cultural themes: it is invigorating stuff. It is fascinating to learn that the First World War pushed sales of Nietzsche's books to new heights, with 140,000 copies of *Thus Spake Zarathustra* sold in 1917 alone. He advocates individualism without narcissism, involving action and perpetual striving in a process of self-overcoming; he prefers struggle to happiness, freedom to safety, nobility to conformity – all of which requires courage. One cannot envisage him liking posts or the artificiality of much digital communication. The book shows how he can act as a tonic and inspiration to live our lives to the full and without fear.

### ■ Stand Firm – Resisting the Self-Improvement Craze

Svend Brinkman

Polity 2017, 138 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Stoicism has become quite popular recently, and in this book a Danish philosopher and psychologist uses this background to take aim at the self-help industry as an antidote to the accelerating pressures of modern life, and the concomitant urge to become happier and more productive. The downside of this fast pace is record levels of stress and mental health challenges. To this end, the author encourages us to be rooted and stand firm rather than be in a state of perpetual motion. He recommends in a series of chapters that we cut out inner navel-gazing, focus on the negative, say no more often, suppress our feelings, sack your coach, read a novel rather than a self-help book and dwell on the past. I think there is probably an Aristotelian mean here where one can take on board the useful insights from both angles. It is arguable that some solutions to our challenges can indeed come from the past, and I appreciated the reminder to read novels as well as philosophical contemplation of death in relation to the value of life. Ironically, this view is also a form of inner-directedness, as well as a refreshing corrective.

### ■ The Authority of Service and Love

Roger Payne

Christian Alternative (John Hunt) 2017, 178 pp., £13.99, p/b.

This is a very interesting book about the crisis of authority in the Christian Church. It begins with a discussion of the relationship between authority, tradition, power and legitimacy as they relate to scripture and the church as an institution. There is always a balance to be struck between revelation and reason and the relative emphasis between tradition and the Bible varies, with reformers tipping the balance towards the latter and a literal interpretation that itself has partly created the crisis of authority. The author discusses exercise of authority in the early years of the Church and the exercise of power in the Middle Ages. He then examines how we respond to religious authority and why we do so in psychological terms. Living as we do in an age of extremes, it is instructive to look at authoritarianism, dogmatism and kind of blind obedience characteristic of fundamentalism. This leads him to a new understanding of authority as service and love, as indicated in the title. A well informed and timely discussion.

■ **Simple Explanation of Work Ideas**

Maurice Nicoll

Eureka 1998, 68 pp., no price given, p/b.

Dr Maurice Nicoll (1884-1953) was a leading exponent of the 'Work' of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky - I read his books *The New Man*, *The Mark* and *Living Time* many years ago, and this volume was passed on to us by a neighbour. The title reflects the content, so it is a good place to start, where the Work is defined not as a building, a place, a book, a system, dogma or tradition, but rather something that lives in our hearts if we find it. The main Work is self observation so that we become more conscious. The book describes the four states of the human being, observing that most of us are asleep and that we need to pursue self-observation in order to wake up and raise our level of being. It explains the nature of intellectual, emotional, motor and instinctive centres and the path of understanding and being towards a more complete state - a balanced or number four person. Self-development is achieved through activating the Essence so that the personality becomes passive and the Essence active. This result is only achievable through work on oneself.

■ **The Teachings of Mr P.**

Delilah Sullivan –  
www.delilahsullivan.com

Newton Black 2017, 334 pp., £12.50, p/b.

This unusual and profound channelled work originated during the author's healing process from cancer. She had no previous specific knowledge about the contents, nor of Plato, ostensibly the alter ego of Mr P, although both characters feature in dialogue. She also found the process liberating in terms of healing from unhelpful emotions, images and thoughts. There are 154 sessions with sequential developments discussing love, emotions, trust, purpose, desire, virtue, self-realisation, time and space. There is no doubt that the reader is engaging with a penetrating mind in view of the exposition, while a number of themes were of course examined by Plato himself. Readers are encouraged to make life choices from within through wisdom and knowingness and to experience emotions fully, for instance joy and love.

On the philosophical side, there are many interesting ideas such as the notion of time-lines, principally those of the current physical lifetime and what is called the master time-line relating to our lessons and loves and the expression of our full capacity. We are encouraged to trust and let go, making time for silence and stillness; then there are 20 practices at the

end, mainly designed to quiet the mind and allow inspiring thoughts to come through. The amount of time we live is less important than its quality, as the following quotation indicates: 'Did he or she lead a good life? An enjoyable and purposeful life, spreading love and joy? A life another would be happy living? Did this person cause learning and comfort to flow from their very being? To inspire and receive gratitude? To provoke thought and discussions? Reflection and diversity?' There is much to ponder in this book, so I would recommend reading it as it was written, one session at a time over a period of six months.

■ **The Prophets and the Goddess**

Dionysios Psilopoulos

Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2017, 307 pp., £64.99, h/b.

As the title indicates, the scholarly book examines the contributions of four poets - WB Yeats, Aleister Crowley, Robert Graves and Ezra Pound - to the spirituality of the goddess in the light of the chthonic esoteric tradition. Their is a very good introduction on the Golden Dawn, in which Yeats and Crowley were involved, introducing the theme of the Great Work, the purification and exaltation of the human psyche in the process of attaining theosis or identity and unity with the divine nature as well as a merging of conscious with subconscious. All four poets stand for an antithetical tradition upholding the primacy of the soul and imagination rather than the rational mind so that the poet becomes a priest-magician and an expression of the feminine. There is also a process of the reconciliation of opposites, including Apollonian and Dionysian elements after the philosophical insights of Nietzsche and the emergence of anthropology at the end of the 19th century. This is an erudite and very well informed discussion that sheds new light not only on esotericism and the goddess generally, but also the different ways in which the authors featured approach it as part of the re-emergence of a gnostic impulse in our time.

■ **Miracles – A Very Short Introduction**

Yujin Nagasawa

Oxford 2017, 115 pp., £7.99, p/b.

This is a very fair-minded treatment of miracles, starting with a thorough definition and then moving on to miracles reported in religious texts, belief and rationality in relation to miracles, and whether there can be miracles without the supernatural. The author identifies eight common features, suggesting that a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature caused by an intentional agent, and that it has religious significance. It might be more

accurate to say that it is a violation of what we know and assume about nature rather than of the laws of nature as such, as Hume famously proposed in the 18th century. For instance, in the section on reports from religious texts, instances of clairvoyance, precognition and healing are quoted without relating these to modern research. The treatment of Hume's arguments is very good, but makes no mention of the demolition by Alfred Russel Wallace over a hundred years ago. Miracles without the supernatural are illustrated with exceptional altruism, but this is rather different concept. In the end, what one regards as a miracle will depend upon one's prior assumptions and understanding.

**PSYCHOLOGY-CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES**

■ **The Many Faces of Coincidence**

Laurence Browne

Imprint Academic 2017, 202 pp., £14.95, p/b.

Many debates around synchronicity and coincidence revolve around meaning and statistical probability, which can lead to a rather sterile exchange. This creative book breaks new ground by taking a much wider view of the field and attempting to evolve a comprehensive model for the various ways in which they can be understood and explained. The five chapters explore synchronicity, chance, cosmic coincidences, quantum physics and even the Tao as an example of what Jung called *unus mundus* - the world as a psychophysical unity. The first chapter identifies some influences and predecessors, including Schopenhauer, Leibniz, the Sinologist and translator of the I Ching Richard Wilhelm, JB Rhine and Wolfgang Pauli, who collaborated with Jung on synchronicity and who preferred the term 'meaning - correspondence'. Jung wrote the introduction to Wilhelm's *I Ching* and also to his edition of the alchemical text *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

The second chapter looks astounding events that are nevertheless due to chance and can be explained in terms of probability. What is at issue is causality, which is one of the reasons why Jung defined synchronicity as acausal connecting principle. These and other considerations lead to Browne's suggestions of four coincidence categories: random chance explanations, conventional causal explanations, paranormal causal explanations and synchronicity explanations. He then widens his view to

consider cosmic coincidences, using the anthropic principle and the fine structure constant as examples. He discusses the work of Sir Roger Penrose relating to the precision required at the Big Bang for a state of low entropy compatible with the second law of thermodynamics. Then moving on to quantum physics and entanglement, he includes Dean Radin's work on entanglement in parapsychology while at the same time discussing the power of scientism leading to rejection of experimental results incompatible with this worldview. It was refreshing to read such an open discussion exploring the implications of the *unus mundus* and the participatory nature of reality. This leads into the final chapter on the Tao as an instantiation of this, bringing in not only Jung but also David Bohm and Heidegger with his Chinese collaborator Paul Hsiao Shih-yi - underlying the whole discussion is the journey towards the union of opposites through the middle path, something which the author arguably achieves in his treatment of this delicate topic.

### ■ Metapsychology of the Creative Process

Jason W. Brown

Imprint Academic 2017, 200 pp., £14.95, p/b.

Subtitled 'continuous novelty as the ground for creative advance', this philosophical and psychological exploration of creativity is based on the author's clinical studies of focal brain injuries that reveal subsurface lines of processing. He calls this process theory microgenetic, in contrast to mainstream computational psychology. One of his essential thoughts, indicated in the subtitle, is the continuum of novelty in nature, whereby creativity represents an intermittent accentuation of this novelty. Like evolution, microgenesis is unidirectional with branching, but it is also time cyclical and recurrent and may even be the origin of the concept of evolution as it has emerged in human brain. More generally, the book is a philosophical attempt to make room for genuine novelty and creativity that are problematic within a system of causal determinism. The discussion is relatively technical, and includes not only many aspects of creativity, but also time, dreams, self and feeling.

### ■ Surgeon from Another World

George Chapman and Roy Stemman

White Crow Books 2017 (1978), 217 pp., £13.99, p/b.

First published in 1978, this book provides some of the best documented evidence for survival in the literature. George Chapman was a healer and trance medium, who for 50 years enabled the ophthalmic surgeon

William Lang, who had died in 1937, to conduct consultations and operations through him, sometimes as many as 40 a day. The skill and knowledge exhibited by Lang were way beyond Chapman's background and education, and close members of Lang's family - including his daughter and granddaughter - were absolutely convinced of his identity and continuing work. The book documents many cases of diagnosis, operations and healing, often in circumstances where conventional treatment had nothing more to offer. Fascinatingly, Lang claimed to be operating on the spirit body with a consequent effect on the physical body. The unbiased reader could not fail to agree with the book's statement that it provides irrefutable evidence that the spirit of the dead surgeon continued to heal the sick, thus proving life after death and the reality of spiritual healing at the same time. Many qualified scientists and doctors investigated the Chapman/Lang collaboration and indeed conversed with Lang himself. Fascinatingly, the original edition reports a Network Conference (p. 185 ff.) on Science, Mind and the Spirit of Man held at the Royal Society of Medicine in May 1977. The Network is reported as a group open to spiritual reality, and I imagine many members read the original edition of this book. This new edition contains important new information about identities and further corroborating evidence (William Lang's deceased son Basil continues his work with George Chapman's son Michael). Nearly 40 years on, the book can be thoroughly recommended to readers with an interest in survival and spiritual healing.

### ■ I Saw a Light and Came Here

Erlendur Haraldsson and James G. Matlock

White Crow Books 2017, 289 pp., £13.99, p/b.

This is a book in two parts about children's experiences of reincarnation, building on the original work initiated by Ian Stevenson in the 1960s, with whom Erlendur collaborated. As such, it serves as a good introduction to the field with many case histories analysed in terms of accurate recall, so that readers can assess these for themselves. In his part, Erlendur also discusses deathbed visions, NDEs, spontaneous contact with the departed and through mediums, and memories of birth and life in the womb. He concludes by listing the outstanding characteristics of cases of memories of previous lives, putting these in the context of other related findings suggesting continued consciousness after death. Jim Matlock adds his own set of cases, some of which cross international borders. He also discusses xenoglossy - speaking an unknown language - and some suicide cases. He then adds his own analysis

of a number of factors, including violent death, length between incarnations and gender change, which seems comparatively rare. Some of his later cases seem to indicate personal control over the reincarnation process, about which he has his own ideas, including the interesting one that birthmark similarities are brought about by a form of PK on the developing embryo.

### ■ The Boy who Know too Much

Cathy Byrd

Hay House 2017, 229 pp., \$19.99, h/b.

This gripping account of a child's past life memories - with a foreword by Jack Canfield and an introduction by Eben Alexander - resembles in some respects the equally extraordinary account by James Leuninger of his past as a Pacific air fighter. In this case, Christian Haupt's recollections as the great baseball player Lou Gehrig were matched by an equal talent and obsession for the game - at the age of under 3 he gets to throw the ceremonial pitch for the Dodgers. He identifies himself as Lou from a number of photos and is deeply disturbed by his difficult relationship with fellow player Babe Ruth. Cathy suggests that one photo of two men hugging is Lou with Ruth but Christian corrects her by accurately identifying his coach as the other man. It turns out that, according to Christian, Cathy was his mother as Lou, which she herself confirms in hypnotic regressions, which themselves bring out more verifiable facts and point to the persistence of love across time. Related to the book reviewed above, Jim Tucker comes from the University of Virginia to interview Cathy and Christian, and is himself the author of a book on memories of previous lives. This is reassuring to Cathy, who finds that Christian's story has parallels with other cases, and indeed the boy begins to forget these memories as is typically the case around the age of six. Lou died at the early age of 37, and there are further revealing details around his death. Another parallel with the Leuninger book is the journey as a Christian of coming to terms with past lives and reincarnation, especially when there is so much persuasive evidence here, far more than can be conveyed in a short review. It is certainly one of the strongest such narratives in the literature.

### ■ Enlightenment is your Nature

Osho

Watkins 2017, 255 pp., £12.99, p/b.

In this lucid exposition of the nature of mind and consciousness, Osho takes the reader through a process of peeling the onion of personality and understanding our mind as conditioning

or ideology so that we can wake up to our true unconditioned nature through a process of meditation and awareness. While Western psychology studies the mind as an object from the outside, the Eastern approach aims to go beyond the mind from within in what he calls the psychology of the Buddhas. We gradually move to the perspective of the witness, which is one with the ocean, what David Hawkins would call the ultimate context (see my review of his book elsewhere in this issue). It is only in the West that we have had to develop psychotherapy, and in this case we are trying to integrate the mind rather than go beyond it. The Eastern psychology is one of transcendence, perhaps of being rather than becoming. Enlightenment is recognising the eternity of your being, living from moment to moment – Osho subtly expresses this in evocative words (pp. 224-5) with an emphasis on growth rather than perfection. In the process, we transcend not only Western psychology but also Western philosophy in moving from thinking to seeing. One should also remember, however, that no matter how many books we read on enlightenment, practice is more important, however good the book....

■ **The Sleeping Giant – a Journey of Enlightenment**

Cindy Beadman (SMN) – [www.cindybeadman.com](http://www.cindybeadman.com)

Self-published 2017, 265 pp., no price given.

Inspired by the love of her inner child, Cindy takes the reader on an archetypal transformative journey of healing and awakening. The book is delightfully multifaceted, with interweaving themes, diagrams, sketches and paintings by the author so that the journey is seen from many developing angles. Part of the narrative structure is provided by a version of Jack and the Beanstalk and his encounter with Giant. Then there are diary entries from her childhood evoking the difficult conflict between her parents; also current diary entries, self-revelatory stories, poems and more general teachings, all of which contribute to the overall tapestry. Here is one of the beautiful poems:

*The Whole*

*Death is an expression of life,  
Life is an expression of being,  
Being is an expression of spirit,  
Spirit is an expression of divine consciousness,  
Divine consciousness is an expression of the Whole,  
The Whole is an expression of itself.*

Another striking insight is a poem arranged as a downward shaped triangle

with each line beginning with Fate, then another upward shaped triangle meeting it beginning each line with Destiny. Then these two are merged on the following page to form the Star of David. Fate appears from the outside, Destiny arises from within and represents surrender and harmony with the Divine. Duality is also expressed by means of some of the sketched diagrams evoking the evolutionary process of consciousness and the journey of the soul, which is spiral rather than linear, with pockets of darkness to be brought into the light, as also streaming through the dynamic and colourful paintings. Towards the end, there is a poetic Starlight Message, part of which is about breathing in the light of your loving wholeness so as to breathe it out again and become more than love by letting go of love. This is a mystical and beautiful message to the soul.

■ **Reflections on the Truth**

Murray (Nick) Nicholls (SMN)

Self-published 2017, 282 pp., no price given.

This is Nick's third book describing his unusual experiences and journey towards a greater understanding of various interacting levels of consciousness, many of which go far beyond the physical. The central message of the book refers to the mechanism of the universe in terms of the essence of thought, intent, focus and desire manifesting as patterns in the physical world. This also involves understanding the message of symbols and synchronicity, of which Nick gives many fascinating and vivid examples, insisting on three separate related events as a confirmation of the message from the 'support team'. Some sections consist of directly channelled material, and others, equally important, of poems conveying spiritual truths. An important theme running through the book during a period when he had cancer is to focus on a perfectly healthy body and try to understand message of the illness, which was partly one of self-healing. Nick's experiences over 30 years have convinced him of the continuity of consciousness beyond death, summed up in the beautiful poem on p. 165. There is a message that human population will be reduced by 90% by the year 2100, but that we should have no fear and realise that everything is really happening in the now, which 'is, was and always will be'. The importance of imagination and intent also means that we are ultimately responsible for how our path unfolds within the universal energy field, and it is liberating to have a broader view of the nature of consciousness and life, as presented in this volume - also reminding us that we are expressions of the One, and to focus our attention on love, harmony, peace and gratitude – as St Paul said, think on these things.

■ **A Dream It May Be, But the Dream Goes On**

Nick Roach (SMN)

NR Publishing 2017, 296 pp., no price given.

This spiritual autobiography goes right back to Nick's first stirrings and strivings on the spiritual path, beginning earlier than most and describing the everyday contexts in which some extraordinary experiences and unfolding occurred. As the title implies, some elevated states of oneness make ordinary life seem like a dream. A key figure in Nick's development was the Australian teacher Barry Long, with whom he did many seminars and developed a close connection. In life, and especially in relationships, we are meant to grow in love while remaining as conscious as possible in every circumstance. There is a parallel sense of Oneness also referred to by Nick Nicholls above but for Nick this is a return journey to our original sense of Being.

He checks his progress with Barry from time to time, with laconic responses such as the following: 'enlightenment is a constant state of Consciousness in which the knowledge is implicit. There is no knowing in it for it is nothing to speak of; it can't be known. So you are not enlightened, or put more really you have not realised that state. Nevertheless, your description of being shows a profound realisation or realisations.' Along the way comes a moment when the Master is internalised, and for Nick this coincided with Barry's death. Even when one is relatively far along the path, one is still faced with testing circumstances but these are experienced differently from an expanded sense of self in parallel with deep self-enquiry and an overall sense of harmony – interestingly, this is associated with the sense of no longer doing anything, which is almost Taoist in spirit. Readers will find elements of their own journey mirrored in this autobiography of great integrity.

■ **The Logic of Self-Destruction**

Matthew Blakeway ([www.logicofself-destruction.com](http://www.logicofself-destruction.com))

Meyer Leboeuf 2014, 376 pp., £18.99, h/b.

With a background in philosophy, mathematics, logic and investment banking, the author adopts an interdisciplinary approach to his quest understand the logic of self-destruction as an algorithm of human rationality based on the fact that beliefs share a common logical structure. He makes a fundamental distinction between believing that and believing in - the latter is the source of our problems. He proceeds on the basis of a number of scenarios involving emotions entailing simulation or deception while we strive

for well-being - Blakeway defines humans as machines that goal-seek emotional outcomes, a terminology that may put some readers off and situates the discourse in terms of algorithms (later he defines humans as self-referencing biological machines or robustly logical computational devices to stress the logic of belief). Philosophy and language play an important role in defining different structures of well-being and articulating their expression.

As an ideology, capitalism is based on making people richer on the premise that wealth enhances human well-being, which we now know is true only up to a point, even if advertising tries to persuade us otherwise as a form of tactical deception. However, it still drives political systems towards continuous economic growth, which itself embodies a logic of self-destruction in terms of the environment. As the author points out, this is particularly clear in the ideology of many who oppose the scientific consensus on global warming. He maintains that ideologies defined by measures of emotional well-being are false because the ideology itself alters the perception of the emotion that is the measure of its truth, thus creating a circular causality (p. 244). Within an ideological framework, self-destructive acts are rationally derived from manipulated emotional behaviour – one can see how this applies to suicide bombers with their belief in their ultimate well-being in paradise even if this involves the destruction of their own life and that of others in the process. With respect to belief in an ideology, the committed believer is unable to escape a pattern of irrefutability and may be pressured into modifying his behaviour to demonstrate compliance with the belief, with inevitable self-destructive consequences. This is a complex and demanding book, but the topic could not be more important in our time.

### ■ Illusionism as a Theory of Consciousness

Edited by Keith Frankish

Imprint Academic 2017, 289 pp., £19.95, p/b.

This is a reprint of an issue of the Journal of Consciousness Studies about illusionism – the view that phenomenal consciousness is an introspective illusion misrepresenting experiences as having phenomenal properties. Its history includes early identity theorists and it is eliminativist in terms of phenomenal consciousness. Its proponents argue that a new research programme is timely in view of the shortcomings of the dominant physicalist approach based on realism. Another way of characterising the position is to say that it replaces the hard problem with the illusion problem. The seventeen essays that follow take a variety of positions, supportive and

critical, for instance from Susan Blackmore, who replaces illusionism with delusionism and, Daniel Dennett who takes illusionism as the obvious default theory. It is definitely a volume for the specialist in terms of explicating many technical issues.

### ■ Foreshoring the Unconscious

Ruth Jones (SMN)

Layfield Press 2017, 54 pp., no price given

Those of us who attended the continental meeting in Poland reported elsewhere in this issue will have had the interesting experience of collective foreshoring, led by Ruth. In this short book, she describes the experience and practice of psychoanalysis in creating a mutual space in which new insight can arise and things can be seen differently. She draws on the interesting Jewish concept of Kavannah with its implication of intention and awareness reaching beyond towards the spirit and enquiring what she calls an active engagement with courageous integrity – both sitting back and holding open. Here the definition of the foreshore is important as a symbol of the porous boundary between the conscious and unconscious – as she points out, water is constantly ebbing and flowing, never at rest and implying flexible navigation in changing conditions. This is a sensitive and informative account of what a psychoanalytic practitioner does.

## ECOLOGY-FUTURES STUDIES

### ■ River of Life, River of Death

Victor Mallet

Oxford 2017, 316 pp., £20, h/b.

Victor Mallet is an FT journalist who is based in New Delhi between 2012 and 2016, which gave him a chance to research and write this brilliant and fascinating book about the Ganges, covering, as Lord Stern observes, history, geography, environment, politics and religion. The title indicates the thesis, also passionately advocated by Swami Saraswati that if Ganga dies, India dies. If Ganga thrives, India thrives. The lives of 500 million people are not a small thing. In his view, it will be a journey from filth to faith. It is striking to read historical accounts when the river was much less polluted than it is now, but it turns out that its sacredness and the purity associated with this is one paradoxical factor that has held back the necessary action to clean it up. The scale of the challenge is daunting, especially in view of continued population increase (300 million in 1947, 1.3 billion in 2016 and a projection of 1.7 billion by 2050) and the chronic lack of proper sewage and toilet facilities with severe pollution implications for every river, not just the

Ganges. Population pressure also impacts water supply, and the author demolishes the argument for a demographic dividend. He discusses parallels with the cleaning up of the Thames and the Rhine, but the challenge of the Ganges is an order of magnitude greater, as Prime Minister Modi realises. Not only the essential cleanup, but also the fact that 70% of the flow of Ganges consists of meltwater from the Himalayas, where the glaciers are in the process of disappearing. The author has performed a great service by highlighting the scale of the problem as well as conveying the overall significance of the Ganges for India and its future.

### ■ The Simpol Solution

John Bunzl and Nick Duffell

Peter Owen 2017, 207 pp., £14.99, p/b.

I have reviewed John Bunzl's earlier work on his Simultaneous Policy solution to international challenges, and this is by far the most comprehensive statement of this important idea, whose time has surely come. A key concept is what the authors call Destructive Global Competition, which inhibits nation states from making decisions or taking action for fear of their international competitive position, especially in an economic system focused on growth. An important pressure is the current ability of transnational corporations to move around the world to places where taxes are lowest and environmental regulations least stringent. The authors encourage us to move our sense of identity and belonging to a more worldcentric perspective, outlining the ways in which Simpol fulfils this in conceptual and policy terms. They see cultural evolution as a balance between competition and cooperation, and argue that cooperation on a wider scale has become an evolutionary and indeed ethical imperative, with corresponding new forms of governance. Considerable progress has already been made in persuading politicians from all parties to align themselves with Simpol, and we ourselves can participate by supporting the idea and sharing it with our friends – see [www.simpol.org](http://www.simpol.org)

### ■ Traditions and Trends in Global Environmental Politics

Edited by Olaf Correy and Hayley Stevenson

Earthscan 2017, 200 pp., £29.99 p/b.

This volume reviews and updates a 1996 collection on the environment and international relations that was the first of its kind. On the one hand, environmental awareness has increased and we now speak of the Anthropocene era, but our international structures still reflect 'unreconstructed statism' of countries putting their own interests first. The challenge is expressed by the editors

in their phrase ‘societal multiplicity and planetary singularity’ that demands a shift away from pluralism and towards what Robert Falkner calls solidarism. As other commentators like Richard Falk have observed, nation states are incapable of resolving our complex interconnected challenges, so the need for new structures and institutions is urgent. There is an interesting discussion of epistemic communities with authority, such as the IPCC, inputting into policy and helping redefine an expanded concept of security beyond an exclusively military focus. Stephen Hobden outlines the dangers of prospective geo-engineering, already highlighted in previous reviews in this publication, where the danger lies in linear thinking within a complex adaptive system – and all this raises new issues in the relationship between humans and nature, not to mention intergenerational justice.

### ■ Global Catastrophes – A Very Short Introduction

Bill McGuire

Oxford 2017, 123 pp., £7.99, p/b.

An informative if dispiriting update on when and how the world might come to an end, whether natural or human induced. It is sobering to read that an average of over 100,000 people perish every year from natural disasters and that they have cost around \$1 trn in the last seven years. McGuire covers the history of the Earth, the likely consequences of global warming, the prospect of the next Ice Age, eruptions and Tsunamis, earthquakes - including the overdue recurrence of the 1923 Kanto Earthquake in Tokyo (population 37m) - and the threat from space. He summarises all this in the epilogue, which makes pretty grim reading – and the prospects for a course correction are not bright given our track record of political and economic short-termism and our preference for technical fixes rather than lifestyle modification.

### ■ The Maria Thun Biodynamic Calendar 2018

Matthias Thun

Floris Books 2017, 64 pp., £7.99, p/b.

This is the annual biodynamic Bible. Besides the calendar itself with advice on the best time to plant and harvest, the book contains useful special features on manure and fertiliser, crop rotation, nettles and potato cultivation. The calendar itself is explained in terms of his background with notes relating to anticipated weather patterns. The detailed classification is also explained, and there is a short page on the care of bees.

## GENERAL

### ■ On the Ocean – the Mediterranean and the Atlantic from Prehistory to 1500 AD

Sir Barry Cunliffe

Oxford 2017, 631 pp., £30, h/b.

I reviewed Sir Barry’s last brilliant work, *Between Steppe, Desert and Ocean* just over a year ago and here he has produced another magisterial tour de force replete with informative charts and beautiful illustrations. The scope of the book is equally epic, and some themes such as the development of trade routes reappear a new context. As one would expect, the narrative unfolds historically as we learn about the fascinating contrasts between the enclosed Mediterranean and the seemingly boundless Atlantic. And although the topography is broadly similar over the centuries, the outlook of those who live there changes over time. Interestingly, the maps are arranged with West at the top, which makes for an intriguing reinterpretation of conventional perception. Right at the outset, the author draws a sharp contrast between the land marked with human activity and the sea, which has no history and always presents a challenge to humans with its ceaseless motion and ever present danger, archetypally personified by mythological monsters. As an archaeologist, Sir Barry goes back further than historians and faces the problem of relative lack of evidence on which to base historical models (as he points out, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence). For instance, we know from remains that people travelled to Crete tens of thousands of years ago, but there is of course no trace of their wooden boats. In other cases, the best evidence of commodities traded is provided by one or more of the 120 wrecks in the Mediterranean.

In a chapter referring to the combat that is called navigation, the reader gains a detailed knowledge of Mediterranean currents and winds, as for example through the Straits of Gibraltar. The development of technology is clearly correlated with advances in boatbuilding, but again there is no extant evidence before 5500 BC. It is extraordinary to discover that the Egyptian pharaoh Necho sent an expedition clockwise round Africa to prove it was surrounded by water in 600 BC. Following on from that period, Sir Barry discusses advances leading to much larger ships used for warfare - indeed, later in the book he specifies the three functions of trade, raid and migration. Some of these trade patterns can also be inferred from archaeological finds in a variety of places, for instance

wine amphorae. Moving on, we come to the Vikings and their adventures, for which we have more extant evidence. More powerful boats enabled extensive warfare to be conducted at sea, later exacerbated by competition for colonies - this is only just beginning after Columbus in the early 1500s, when the book ends. Sir Barry makes the interesting point that in this respect the sea can be regarded as the driving force in human history as European powers overcame its challenge and expanded into other parts of the world. Another fascinating sub-theme covered is the overseas migration of early Christian settlers, especially from Ireland to Scotland. By the time readers come to the end of this richly detailed odyssey, they have a greatly enhanced appreciation of role of the sea, navigation and trade in the history of Western civilisation. The book is an extraordinary achievement, all the more so for its engaging and elegant style.

### ■ Edward Burnett Tylor, Religion and Culture

Edited by Paul-Francois Tremlett, Liam T. Sutherland and Graham Harvey

Bloomsbury Academic 2017, 219 pp., £85, h/b.

Sir Edward Tylor (1832-1917) was the first professor of social anthropology at Oxford and is author of the famous *Primitive Culture*, which he published in two volumes in 1871. His achievements are all the more remarkable as he received no higher education due to his Quaker background. His interest in anthropology began at the age of 23 when he was advised to travel to warmer climates on account of his tuberculosis. He spent time in Mexico, during which he became fascinated with indigenous cultures and met the archaeologist Henry Christy. I bought *Primitive Culture* in the Bayswater Road in the early 1980s, and used it as a source book for the first chapter of my book *Survival*.

It is interesting to note that in the course of the 35 years since I wrote it, there has been a sea change in the use of terminology, so that the term ‘primitive’ can no longer be used, and has mutated into indigenous. This leads into the most common criticisms of Tylor - which would also apply to Sir J.G. Frazer - namely his ethnocentrism and evolutionism. It was commonplace at the time to regard Western civilisation as intrinsically superior and at a higher evolutionary level – hence the liberal use of the words primitive, savage and barbarian. One of the most interesting things about his work, and which is revisited in this volume, is his definition of religion as a belief in spiritual beings (Tylor also had some experience of spiritualism, although he was less sympathetic than Alfred Russel Wallace). It is clear that his

work is driven by theory, even if he did interesting ethnographic research, and this difference in theory divided him from his contemporary Andrew Lang. However, contemporary scholars in this volume still find the questions Tylor asked of interest, even if their approach is different. Incidentally, my father's uncle Sir Everard im Thurn, who was respectively Governor of Ceylon, then of Fiji and the South Pacific, was also a noted anthropologist, whose work was introduced by a later professor at Oxford, R.R. Marett. In those days, communications to and from London would have taken months to arrive, so he himself had plenty of time for research, and his wife for painting. A far cry from our incessant drive of activity these days.

### ■ The Sum of Small Things

Elizabeth Currid-Halkett

Princeton 2017, 254 pp., £24.95, h/b.

In 1899, the Norwegian economist Thorstein Veblen published his book *Theory of the Leisure Class*, where he coined the phrase conspicuous consumption. The author reflects on and updates these trends with her idea of the aspirational class as one highly educated and defined by cultural capital rather than income bracket - people whose values and lifestyle lead them to buy organic heirloom tomatoes from the farmers' market and breastfeed their babies. These are examples of 'inconspicuous consumption', and this class uses its income to pay for domestic help, educational advantage and private yoga or music lessons - all of which passes on the cultural capital in terms of advantage and is therefore a trend against equality of opportunity. A telling example is the use of the phrase 'kitchen supper', which implies that you also have a dining room that you use on more formal occasions. Indeed, the dinner party and its fashionable topics of conversation also implies a certain background, and our upbringing is manifest in terms of how we hold our cutlery and whether or not we put milk into our tea before or after pouring the tea - apparently this was originally due to the poor quality of crockery used by less privileged people.

The analysis draws on original research, with many informative graphs and tables. Some products like Ballet Slippers nail varnish - a new one on me - are not expensive but reflect the underlying assumption that it is natural to look after one's nails. Then there is conspicuous production, for instance choosing fair trade and ethically sourced coffee. In deciding where to place a new store, the main criterion for Whole Foods is apparently the density of college graduates within walking distance. These graduates are educated and informed, and this is reflected in their shopping habits, as

implied above - another example would be the choice of an electric or hybrid car. Interestingly, the middle class spends more as a percentage of income on conspicuous consumption than the top percentiles, which reflects the extent to which previously exclusive products have become widely available. However, the author also highlights the caveat that income level and happiness are not correlated beyond an annual \$75,000. She concludes by observing that these lifestyle choices are simply not an option for huge segments of society and that there is an element of narcissism in the aspirational class whose habits reveal who they are.

### ■ How Universities can Help Create a Better World

Nicholas Maxwell

Imprint Academic 2014, 158 pp., £9.95, p/b.

I reviewed Nicholas Maxwell's *Understanding Scientific Progress* in the last issue, and in this earlier book he focuses his thesis more particularly on how universities can help create a better world by shifting their focus from knowledge-inquiry to wisdom-inquiry, so the aim of education becomes wisdom oriented towards solving our most pressing global challenges related to living together on a finite planet. The author would agree with EF Schumacher when he said that humanity was now too clever to survive without wisdom. He begins by recapitulating the enormous problems we face which at one level have been exacerbated by scientific and technological development - think of the destructiveness of weapons - even while human nature is relatively constant. As it is, the pursuit of knowledge is underpinned by the general aim to improve the lot of humanity, but the danger is that this can become purely theoretical, divorced from practical application and the creation of more enlightened, wise and civilised world.

A first and fundamental step is clarity of aim, and the cultivation of aim-improving methods. One basic issue with knowledge-inquiry is that it excludes values and aspirations from the intellectual domain of enquiry, thus undercutting its own potential ethical orientation and tending to lose sight of the wood for the specialist trees. Wisdom-inquiry seeks to articulate our problems of living and then propose and critically assess possible solutions from the standpoint of practicality and desirability. The author provides a detailed blueprint of how universities can transform themselves, recommending that each university creates a regular seminar or symposium

devoted to the sustained discussion of fundamental problems that cut across conventional academic boundaries. The next chapter looks at how wisdom-inquiry can help solve global problems, focusing in particular on global warming, war, population growth, world population, and destruction of natural habitats and the extinction of species. There are some encouraging signs that what Maxwell calls the wisdom revolution has got underway with interdisciplinary centres in Oxford, Cambridge and his own University College London - and one could observe that such interdisciplinary conversation still takes place Oxbridge high tables, even if this is largely theoretical. The final chapter looks at policies for a wiser world. Such a short review cannot do justice to the rigour and thoroughness of the argument, and the book should be compulsory reading for vice chancellors and senior management of major universities.

### ■ The Forgiveness Project -

[www.theforgivenessproject.com](http://www.theforgivenessproject.com)

Marina Cantacuzino - forewords by Desmond Tutu and Alexander McCall Smith

Jessica Kingsley 2016, 216 pp., £8.99, p/b.

I read and reviewed Desmond Tutu's book on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa over 10 years ago, and he kindly provided a statement for a conference we arranged on forgiveness. This was around the same time that the Forgiveness Project was getting going with an exhibition called 'The F Word' drawing on many of the moving stories reproduced in this remarkable and highly acclaimed collection where we hear the voices of both perpetrators and victims, sometimes even in the same chapter. Poignantly, the book is subtitled 'stories for a vengeful age' and readers will find their understanding of forgiveness immeasurably enhanced and indeed complexified beyond black-and-white thinking. A crucial point about the project is that it does not so much promote as explore forgiveness in its many dimensions, eschewing certainty and self-righteousness. Each story is different, even if common themes emerge, such as the liberation felt by those who manage to forgive and the transformative power of encounters within a framework of restorative justice. Some people forgive, while others close to them regard this as a betrayal, which is absolutely within their rights. A reference to Lord Tebbit illustrates this, but the editor clarifies that she seeks to understand and explain, but never to justify or condone.

Some people come to a feeling of empathy, realising the forces or indeed abuse that

may have driven someone to commit an unspeakable act. As Solzhenitsyn observed, the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, and this recognition of common humanity is a hugely important feature. The journey is often excruciating and positions sometimes irreconcilable, but there is always inner work that can be done and which may lead to a breakthrough. Just imagining some of the scenes described is chilling, and one can only admire the courage and fortitude of those who come through and out the other side on a healing journey. Perhaps the Einstein/Russell message from the 1950s is relevant here: remember your humanity and forget the rest. And beware of certainty, especially when you believe you have the truth. The book had a similar effect on me to reading a collection of letters from prison by Germans resisting Hitler, *Dying we Live* – out of suffering can come hope and a renewed faith in a more humane future.

### ■ Privacy

Leslie P. Francis and John G. Francis

Oxford University Press 2017, 330 pp., \$16.95, p/b.

This invaluable book certainly lives up to its title of what everyone needs to know about privacy in a rapidly evolving digital environment where we are constantly leaving data tracks. In a series of 10 chapters, the book answers nearly 130 questions related to privacy, beginning with its conceptualisation and relationship, for instance, to liberty, confidentiality and secrecy (I know from my own experience that a private debating society in Edinburgh is often characterised as secretive, when it is simply private). There are chapters on protecting personal information, privacy of health information, publicity and educational information, financial and credit information, law enforcement information, privacy within and beyond families and groups, privacy on the Internet and in social media, privacy and security, and finally privacy and democracy. Together, they marshal expertise in law, philosophy, political science, regulatory policy and bioethics. One critical issue is the extent to which we still have a choice to share information; then there is the balance to be struck between autonomy and security - invasion of privacy it is often justified in the name of security and a recent cartoon tellingly bore the caption "Forgotten your password? Email GCHQ". Interestingly, attitudes seem to differ between the US and Europe, with the former emphasising the right to know, and the latter the right to forget. This must be the definitive book on this important and sensitive topic.

### ■ Big Data – A Very Short Introduction

Dawn E. Holmes

Oxford 2017, 125 pp., £7.99, p/b.

Big data is in the news, and this excellent very short introduction brings the reader up to speed and enables them to understand the various components and implications. The aim is to explain how big data works and is changing our lives as well as business. We are now generating unprecedented amounts of data through social networking, online shopping and surfing - all this is collected and collated by such giants as Google and Amazon for commercial purposes. It can potentially also be used for medical purposes but, as explained in the book above, there are many issues relating to privacy and security; here the book covers Snowden and WikiLeaks. It was staggering to learn that in 2015 200 bn emails were sent every day, with only 10% being authentic and not spam or with malicious intent. The final chapter discusses the implications for society, including robots, smart vehicles and smart homes, but without referring to the almost ubiquitous electromagnetic pollution and its potential effects on our health, which many people are already flagging up (see [www.bemri.org](http://www.bemri.org)).

### ■ Secularism

Andrew Copson

Oxford 2017, 153 pp., £12.99, h/b.

This is an excellent and sympathetic introduction to secularism as an approach to the 'ordering of communities, nations, and states', in other words its political rather than religious implications, although the two are often closely tied. The three key elements defined by the French scholar Jean Bauberot are separation of religious institutions from the state and no domination of the political sphere by religious institutions; freedom of thought, conscience and religion for all; and no state discrimination against anyone on the grounds of a religious or non-religious worldview, implying equal treatment. The demand for freedom of thought and conscience is an important outcome of the Enlightenment and the impulses of the French and American revolutions - here Jefferson, who was also ambassador to France, played a key role. This book introduces the main themes and the historical emergence of much that we take granted in terms of freedom, dignity and democracy. It is timely in explaining the case for and against secularism as well as different conceptions. Popper's conception of the open and closed society is as relevant as ever, especially in terms of tolerance at a time of resurgent religious identities and nationalisms, as well as

the instability implied by increasing migration. It turns out that although 90% of states guarantee freedom of religion or belief in their fundamental law, 80% of these states still restrict minority religions in prejudicial ways. We have also seen incidents involving blasphemy, education and dress, especially here in France. It is good to be reminded of the importance of fundamental political rights and I am reminded of a quote from Voltaire to the effect that he disagreed completely with another's views, but would totally defend his right to express them.

### ■ Getting a Life

Thomas Saunders (SMN)

SilverWood 2014, 323 pp., £10.99, p/b.

Tom Saunders has led a very interesting and adventurous life, beginning in the East End in 1932 and continuing through the Blitz to realise his dream of becoming an architect. He set up his own practice in his late 20s, resigning from it just over 20 years later to set up independently with the sense that the ladder he had been climbing was perhaps against the wrong wall. His career during this period gave him plenty of chance to travel, which he describes vividly in a separate section. He describes the midlife crisis as a growing awareness of mortality leading one to ask central questions about we are, why we are here and where we are going. This helps shed light on his courageous decision - influenced by, among others, CG Jung and Joseph Campbell - as a response to an inner calling. A few years later, he had to face bankruptcy as a result of a property market crash, and he remarks that money is an energy force that creates hope and freedom of movement and choice - without it, we feel incarcerated without a means of escape. His interest in buildings led him to write *The Boiled Frog Syndrome* about health and the built environment, and he has also published book about the Tarot. In 1991, he met the love of his life, Janet Edward, whose book is reviewed above, and they spent some years living in France. It is an inspiring narrative that will perhaps encourage readers to live and explore with the same zest and enthusiasm.

### ■ Compassion and Education

Andrew Peterson

Palgrave Macmillan 2017, €4.94, h/b (price is sadly not a misprint!)

Andrew Peterson is a colleague from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues in the University of Birmingham, and he approaches this treatment of compassion from the point of view of virtue ethics and flourishing. It is a very thorough book and will be of interest not only to educators, but also general readers and moral educators in particular.



Various chapters look at compassion as a moral virtue, the emotional and practical aspects of compassion, compassion and the self, then teaching about compassion and schools as compassionate institutions. The chapter on emotions analytically compares compassion with pity, sympathy and empathy. The discussion on compassion and the self goes back to Rousseau as well as Aristotle's notion of self-love and more modern ideas; here the author could have included the work of clinician Paul Gilbert, with his book *The Compassionate Mind*, which emphasises the importance of the first two years of life in wiring our responses. I also appreciated the emphasis on suffering and fragility as part of the human condition, and hope that many schools take the important message of this book on board.

### ■ No Shore Too Far

Jonathan Stedall (SMN)

Hawthorn Press 2017, 147 pp., £12, h/b.

Broadcaster and writer Jonathan Stedall lost his wife Jackie in the autumn of 2014, and these meditative poems on death, bereavement and hope lyrically explore his processing of his loss in simple, moving and deeply human terms. The style is laconic, mostly with short lines with a hint of lilting rhythm and alternating waves of hope and forlorn longing. The poems reach out beyond the present, and are yet grounded in the everyday as those left behind have to continue living and reconstruct their identity in what remains a transient world. As one would expect, he has good days and bad days, sometimes feeling her close and sometimes far away – 'that paradise I glimpse/between the cracks/of daily life.' It is a struggle to trust that all is in fact well even when it does not feel that way. The love and the longing are constantly present even while Jonathan has to surrender and let go, sometimes floundering. There is a great honesty and vulnerability in the writing with which readers can identify- experiences of the dark and light as we strive to understand what may be just beyond our grasp. Yet the search for love and wisdom must continue, and this often involves courage as well as the yearning to connect and reconnect. This is a beautiful and inspiring collection, and especially nourishing for those in a similar situation.

### ■ Songs of a Seeker

Frank Parkinson (SMN)

Omega Point Press 2017, 73 pp., £5, p/b.

This book of poems is divided into five sections: transformation, facets of divinity, everyday heaven, science with soul, and the journey. They deal with evolution and individual human development beyond the ego towards a more expansive sense of self as we seek a higher purpose and

form of expression. Readers will recognise their own inner process reflected in the author's aspirations as well as his musings on nature – there is a nice poem about starlings and another invoking the rhythm of life and reaching towards silence. This all forms part of our common quest.

### ■ President Trump Inc.

T.J. Coles

Clairview Books 2017, 208 pp., £14.99, p/b.

In this meticulously researched book, the author investigates how big business and neoliberalism have empowered populism and the far right, in spite of their supporters failing to realise that the interests of powerful and rich are in fact being further served by their votes. For many years, business has lobbied government for favourable changes in legislation, but now some of these moguls are actually in Trump's cabinet. Far from clearing the swamp, he is in fact filling it up, giving posts to executives in Goldman Sachs who should probably be behind bars for swindling their customers. We can already see the results, especially in dismantling of environmental legislation and withdrawal from the Paris agreement. The book is in two parts, the first about the background in terms of the rise of neoliberalism and corresponding decline of the unions, then the emergence of the far right in both America and Europe, followed by the more recent billionaire populism of alt-right. The second part explains the 'Trump deception' in more detail.

Neoliberalism has driven deregulation of financial markets and privatisation of public resources, which has resulted in growing inequality, falling living standards and social cutbacks. This has naturally led to disillusion with mainstream politics, with different emphases depending on continent and country, but nevertheless correlated with the rise of the far right. As the author points out, the paradox is that these parties actually support the very policies that lead to voter impoverishment. A number of myths are exploded, for instance that Trump won (he lost the popular vote, like George W Bush in 2000), that he won the working class vote and that he is anti-establishment. A separate chapter is devoted to trade deals and tax reform, then another to foreign policy, dominated in the long term by US commitment to Full Spectrum Dominance in world affairs and driven by the CIA and the Pentagon (p. 135). The author concludes that President Trump is what happens when business replaces politics. He sounds a note of hope in his conclusion, having shown polls indicated that Bernie Sanders would have beaten

Trump, by saying that we all have to become active in local politics, which itself has to be democratised – in other words, system change can only come from below.

### ■ My Dog, My Guru

Gilles Moutounet

Hay House 2017, 119 pp., £7.99, p/b.

Some readers may know that I published a book a few years ago, ostensibly written by my dogs and called *How to Look after your Human*. While I used the first person as if I were writing as a dog, the author writes from the human perspective about the lessons that we can learn from dogs, which all dog owners will recognise. It is about trust, living in the now, gratitude, practising unconditional love, play, patience and putting aside conditioning. The last chapter is devoted to the dog poses, namely downward dog and the upward facing dog – of which our dog Joey does a variation, namely stretching his paws straight up in the air. Only today, I was saying how much richer life would be if we were all equally enthusiastic about our daily routine, especially walks! Simple but significant wisdom.

### ■ The 21st Century Revolution – A Call to Greatness

Bruce Nixon

Available from [www.bruce-nixon.com](http://www.bruce-nixon.com), 2015, 148 pp.

This passionate, radical and well-informed book is a comprehensive and systemic analysis of the challenges we face and the almost total lack of appropriate leadership to tackle these. The book is in two parts, diagnosis in the first, and potential responses in the second in connection with politics, economics, the environment and war. The book is deeply critical of neoliberalism and consumerism, arguing that these have had a pernicious influence on society over the last 30 years while leading to environmental overload. Nixon shows how this has widened inequality with a trickle-up effect to the rich and a devastating effect not only on the poorest, but also on the middle class.

He rightly contends that our mindset is at fault and exposes some absurdities of current linear thinking. He advocates root and branch political and economic reform, encouraging readers to respond to a call to greatness by detailing organisations we can support depending on our interests. Many readers will share his view that we need a new social settlement and that we need to become much more active in envisioning and promoting a new kind of future based on universal well-being. He provides

a valuable list of resources as well as links in the narrative, notably to the New Economics Foundation and environmentally based organisations. His chapter on peace draws heavily on the work of Scilla Elworthy, reviewed in the main section. Events have moved on since September 2015, so any new edition would require an update. However, many of us are now aware of the implications of systems thinking and interconnectedness, which must surely come to underpin policy. This book is a good guide in this respect.

## OTHER BOOKS RECEIVED

(the number is now too great to incorporate even in an extended Books in Brief section – even now, there are still over 30 books in the pipeline!):

### ■ The Rome we have Lost

John Pemble

Oxford University Press 2017, 171 pp., £18.99, h/b.

This is an erudite study about the transformation of Old Rome as the Eternal City after 1872 a national capital burdened with heritage and crowded with tourists. My great-grandfather visited the city in 1842 as part of his Grand Tour, and countless people have been influenced by its atmosphere, culture and history. Any lover of the city will find this account of its transformation a fascinating read.

### ■ Our Cosmic Habitat

Martin Rees

Princeton 2017 (2001), 205 pp., \$17.95, p/b.

With a new preface to this highly readable book speculating that the thinking done by organic human type brains may be utterly swamped by the future cogitations of AI.

### ■ Surfing the Quantum World

Frank S. Levin

Oxford 2017, 284 pp., £xx, h/b.

A lucid and comprehensive text on quantum mechanics for lay people.

### ■ Vaccines – What Everyone Needs to Know

Kristen A. Feemster

Oxford 2017, 186 pp., £10.99, p/b.

### ■ Treating Depression Naturally – How flower essences can help rebalance your life

Chris Phillips

Floris Books 2017, 219 pp., £12.99, p/b.

### ■ Highly Sensitive People in an Insensitive World

Ilse Sand

Jessica Kingsley 2017, 160 pp., £9.99, p/b.

A comprehensive and highly recommended resource.

### ■ Philosophical Imagination and the Evolution of Modern Philosophy

James P. Danaher

Paragon House 2017, 172 pp., \$17.95, p/b.

A wide-ranging and accessible exposition of different philosophical schools as ways of making sense of our experience.

### ■ Shakti Rising – Embracing Shadow and Light on the Goddess Path to Wholeness

Kavitha M Chinaiyan MD

Non-Duality Press 2017, 246 pp., \$16.95, p/b.

### ■ Art, Morality and Human Nature – Writings by Richard W. Beardsmore

Edited by John Haldane and Ieuan Lloyd

Imprint Academic 2017, 341 pp., £19.95, p/b.

### ■ The Grail – Volume 3 of The O Manuscript

Watkins 2017, 336 pp., £9.99, p/b.

I reviewed the whole of this extraordinary spiritual odyssey in the Summer 2015 issue of Network Review – email me if you would like a copy.

### ■ Karlik – Encounters with Elemental Beings

Ursula Burkhard

Floris Books 2017, 60 pp., £6.99, p/b.

### ■ Perception – A Very Short Introduction

Brian Rogers

Oxford 2017, 162 pp., £7.99, p/b.

### ■ Thinking and Reasoning – A Very Short Introduction

Jonathan StB.T Evans

Oxford 2017, 134 pp., £7.99, p/b.

### ■ Beeronomics – How Beer Explains the World

Johan Swinnen and Devin Brinski

Oxford 2017, 187 pp., £16.99, p/b.

An engaging history of beer and its economic and social impact – the rise of craft breweries brings us full circle back to the small scale operation of monasteries.

### ■ Concentration and Power in the Food System

Philip H. Howard

Bloomsbury 2017, 207 pp., £21.99, p/b.

A comprehensive introduction to this pretty inexorable process, which includes large players buying up organic brands as one means of extending their control.

### ■ Universities and Colleges – A Very Short Introduction

David Palfreyman and Paul Temple

Oxford 2017, 150 pp., £7.99, p/b.

### ■ Islam, Peace and the “Humzaad Soulmates – a 21st century futuristic reinterpretation of Islami Sufism

Dr Ikram Azam

Pakistani Futuristic Institute and IKIU Iran 2015, 214 pp., £10, h/b

### ■ This was a Dream – essays and poems

Dr Zahra Azam

Pakistani Futuristic Institute and IKIU Iran 2017, 387 pp., £15, h/b

# ATTENTION MEMBERS

## PERSONAL NUMBERS AND OFFICE PROCEDURES

Please help your administration office to run smoothly and so help you efficiently:

- when your details change (address, telephone number, email address etc.) please make sure we know
- use your membership number whenever you contact us, and write it onto all correspondence, conference booking slips, subscription forms and orders for books, services etc.
- book early for conferences - it helps you get a place
- ensure cheques are made out correctly to Scientific & Medical Network; for conferences and orders: always add (legibly!) details of what it's for and membership number on back, even when accompanied by a booking form
- remember we're a network, and it often takes time for all relevant people to be contacted so when making requests give us time to respond helpfully (and always remember to tell us who you are - we sometimes get forms back with no name at all!)
- help us save money; whenever possible pay in £ sterling and remember to gift aid when you make a payment (subscription, conference fees, etc..) - it maximises funds available for more important things.

Office hours are 10.00am to 5.00pm Monday - Thursday.  
Please leave a message if no one is available to take your call.  
We will get back to you as soon as we can.

## Our World Reveals

An unsettled world reveals  
The suffering of  
So many beings  
And our life-sustaining Earth.

Old fairy tales demonstrate  
The collective amnesia  
When hearts and minds lessen  
Through addiction, diversion  
and falsehood.

Yet, in the midst of dimming  
There is no separation of our inner light.  
The natural world radiates  
beauty, vitality and Spirit  
of who we are.

There is the path to wholeness  
And we know it.  
The light within us  
Shines more brightly  
As we connect our inner light with others.

Through love, kindness and compassion  
Our combined magnificent light  
Brings about transformation of what truly is,  
the wholeness of being and radiance.  
All is One.

*Juanita and Henryk Skolimowski*

The Scientific and Medical Network - Science and Religion Forum - The Study Society

# Scientia & Sapientia - a Spiritual Quest

An 80th Birthday Celebration for  
Prof. Ravi Ravindra and Prof. Keith Ward

Saturday 15th September 2018  
Colet House, 151 Talgarth Road, London, W14 9DA



The Scientific &  
Medical Network

Chairs:  
Prof. John Hedley Brooke  
David Lorimer  
and Dr. Peter Fenwick

SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL NETWORK - Annual Gathering 2018

# Evolving towards a Wise and Flourishing Future

Horsley Park, Surrey - 6-8<sup>th</sup> July 2018



The Scientific &  
Medical Network

Prof. Thomas Lombardo

Chairs: Dr. Peter Fenwick  
David Lorimer

The Scientific and Medical Network is a leading international forum for people engaged in creating a new worldview for the 21st century. The Network brings together scientists, doctors, psychologists, engineers, philosophers, complementary practitioners and other professionals, and has Members in more than thirty countries. The Network is a charity which was founded in 1973 and became a company limited by guarantee at the beginning of 2004.

### The Network aims to:

- challenge the adequacy of scientific materialism as an exclusive basis for knowledge and values.
- provide a safe forum for the critical and open minded discussion of ideas that go beyond reductionist science.
- integrate intuitive insights with rational analysis.
- encourage a respect for Earth and Community which emphasises a spiritual and holistic approach.

In asking searching questions about the nature of life and the role of the human being, the Network is:

- Open to new observations and insights;
- Rigorous in evaluating evidence and ideas;
- Responsible in maintaining the highest scientific and ethical standards;
- Sensitive to a plurality of viewpoints

### Network services

- Network Review, published three times a year
- Monthly e-newsletter for members with email
- Promotion of contacts between leading thinkers in our fields of interest
- A blog discussing current and controversial topics and science, medicine and spirituality (<http://scimednet.blogspot.com>)
- A website with a special area for Members including discussion groups
- Regional groups which organise local meetings
- Downloadable MP3s from our conferences

### Network Conferences

The Network's annual programme of events includes:

- Three annual residential conferences (The Annual Gathering, Mystics and Scientists and Beyond the Brain alternating with The Body and Beyond)
- Annual residential conference in a Continental European country
- An open day of dialogues on a topical subject
- Evening lectures and specialist seminars
- Special Interest Group meetings on themes related to science, consciousness and spiritual traditions
- Student concessionary rates and some bursaries available

### Joining the Network

Membership of the Network is open to anyone who wishes to explore some of the most difficult questions of our time in concert with a community of like minds. Student members must be studying towards a first degree engaged in full-time study.

### Subscription Rates

Membership of the Networks costs £60 (with printed review). Please contact the office for further details. £36 electronic and undergraduate student membership free.

### Membership Applications

To request a membership application form, please contact:

The Network Manager,  
The Scientific and Medical Network,  
151 Talgarth Road,  
London W14 9DA, England  
Tel: +44 (0) 203 468 2034

Email: [info@scimednet.org](mailto:info@scimednet.org)

[www.scimednet.org](http://www.scimednet.org)