

Paradigm Explorer

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The Scientific &
Medical Network

NETWORK CALENDAR 2020

May 12	<i>Webinar, 6-8 pm – Barbie Dossey PhD and Deva-Marie Beck PhD - In Florence Nightingale's Footsteps—Individual to Global: Nurses and Midwives in the COVID-19 Crisis and for the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</i>
May 16	<i>Webinar – Anaiya Sophia (10-12) and Christine Page MD (4-6) - The Power of the Sacred Feminine</i>
June 9, 6-8 pm	<i>Webinar with Jules Evans and Dr Tim Read – Breaking Open – Finding a Way through Spiritual Emergency</i>
July 4, 10am – 1 pm	<i>Webinar with Dr Andrew Fellows on Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology</i>
Dates for your diary:	
August 25, 6-8 pm	<i>Webinar with Sir Jonathon Porritt, CBE – Hope in Hell</i>
September (tbc), 6-8 pm	<i>Webinar with Dr Merlin Sheldrake and his new book, Entangled Lives</i>
October (tbc), 6-8 pm	<i>Webinar with Dr Anne Baring – Awakening to a New Story – The Evolutionary Imperative of our Time</i>
October 17-18	<i>Rescheduled Synchronicity and the I Ching, Oxford and Cambridge Club, limited to 30 people – fully booked.</i>
November 6-8	<i>Beyond the Brain, University of Westminster. Speakers: Prof Kim Penberthy, Prof Ed Kelly, Prof Janice Miner Holden, Noelle St Germain-Sehr and Amanda St Germain-Sehr, Dr Oliver Robinson, Dr Tamara Russell, Prof Harald Atmanspacher, Tim Freke, Analaura Trivellat, Dr Peter Fenwick</i>

LONDON - CLAUDIA NIELSEN

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Until further notice our talks will be online. Bookings are made on the London Group page of the SMN website and the Zoom link will be sent out 30 minutes before the talk. Cost is £10 for a regular ticket and £5 for concessions. Information is circulated to the London Group as well as a wider list. 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.

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS - 2020

MAY

Monday 18th	Dr. PHILIP GOFF	<i>Is Consciousness Everywhere? Foundations for a New Science of Consciousness</i>
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JUNE

Monday 1st	Prof JERRY KROTH	<i>Can you be sure that all Crop Circles are Fakes?</i>
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JULY

Monday 6th	LAURENCE FREEMAN OSB	<i>The Contemplative Path in a Time of Crisis</i>
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AUGUST

Monday 10th	Prof JOHN CLARKE	<i>Beyond Nihilism: what can we learn from Nietzsche</i>
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SEPTEMBER

Monday 21st	Dr. MICHAEL BROOKS	<i>Cardano, the Quantum and the Cosmos</i>
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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.

For further guidelines please email: dl@scimednet.org

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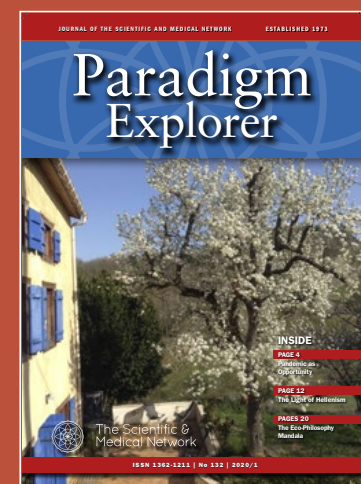
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David Lorimer



Message from the President

Material Crisis as a Spiritual Opportunity

Dr Peter Fenwick

Greetings! I hope you are all keeping safe and are reasonably well fed! Elizabeth and I are holed up in our house in the Scottish Highlands, looking out of the window at the wonderful snow-capped mountains, and the wild life which is simply superb. It's not too easy to find something either positive or cheerful to say at the moment, but I do hope that none of you have lost loved ones or been taken ill yourself. But let's start by looking at the Corona virus from one or two different angles. And doing it this way, I have called this talk 'Opportunity'.

From a scientific point of view, it is all too easy to see that the genesis of the virus is at least partly due to the way we handle our food and the system that we use to feed people on this planet, overcrowded as it is. Our business model, extended by Ayn Rand in the early part of the 20th Century - that we can do anything as long as it is in our own interests - is now outdated. This Western capitalist system with its two aims of plunder and profit contains the seeds of its own destruction. Farming is essentially driven by profit measures rather than the care and health of the animals we eat. Battery farming has been largely given up in Europe, but not in other countries, and in these circumstances the crossing over of pathogens from one species to another is very likely. Indeed, there have been several such crosses in the last few years. It only took more aggressive viruses like Ebola, Mers or Sars to move from local infection and to spread widely and rapidly around the world. The planet is overcrowded and society is set up in a way that favours transmission. Those scientists with the sensitivity to see have predicted that another pandemic must follow, which indeed it has.

The climate emergency is only one factor pointing out the downside of our abuse. Systems designed to exploit the planet are plentiful - plastic in the sea, the annihilation of species - are all symptomatic of the fact that we don't feel sensitivity to the planet or life on it and these lead to a continuous degradation of our physical resources. A simple remedy is difficult without a major change in the way we behave to each other, and in our reductionist,

materialistic view of science (which the Network's Galileo report highlights) and our exploitation of nature.

The Network has been set up always to be at the cutting edge and to query the materialistic view that science has today. We have had great success in this with the setting up of the Spirituality Special Interest Group in the Royal College of Psychiatrists, carried out by Dr. Andrew Powell and colleagues. David Fontana with his colleagues was also successful in establishing a trans-personal Special Interest Group for the British Psychological Society. Both show how we have managed to change, in my view in a very important way, the academic view of spirituality in these subjects. This is continuing with the publication of the Network's Galileo Report, which puts forward a strong case that a materialistic science is far too limited.

There is a huge change in the way we understand consciousness. We have now begun to learn about non-duality. There are methods on this planet and courses which we can attend which will make some of us non-dual. In the non-dual experience, 'you' and 'the thing out there' are one, just one. And that of course means that we will lose a lot of the difficulties which have brought about the situation that we see both in our science and in the way we behave to each other. Of course, if one is part of everybody, then we have to change and the aims that we have, have to be modified, so that we look after the whole and not just ourselves.

The Network can be a positive influence in the process of change. "You are not a human being having a spiritual

experience. You are a spiritual being immersed in a human experience". (attributed to Teilhard de Chardin), and that is very much like it. This doesn't fit with science's view of this dead world around us, where 'matter' is just physical matter, where consciousness is excluded because we can't explain it scientifically. We of course have lots of correlates. The idea that consciousness arises from, and just is the brain, is clearly wrong. So we are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings immersed in a human experience. We are all struggling to de Chardin's Omega point and the extension and evolution of our own consciousness, and this pandemic may be the opportunity we need to help the evolutionary process forward. And in this, I think, the Network has an enormously important part to play, to go out, as was hoped by those who founded us, to support the expression of consciousness in everything and indeed, to show that spiritual experiences are not just brain experiences but are in fact

part of our wider conscious experience.

We can draw many parallels between our present situation and that of Britain during and after World War 2, which was responsible for some of the most radical social changes in our country's history. Many of us, sadly and inevitably, are going to lose people we love and many who we know. But we will also see and experience the life-enhancing kindness of the neighbours who will offer to shop for you when the supermarket home deliveries are overwhelmed, and the smiles you exchange with strangers, simply because you both recognise that we are all in the same boat. So let us take a more positive view of this pandemic as an opportunity to change our behaviour towards each other and our planet.

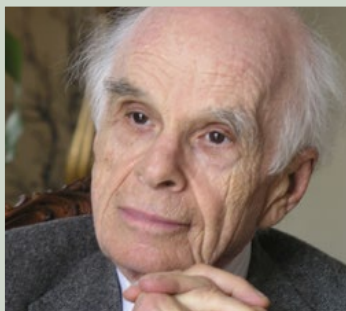
So in our Network conferences, when we start exploring these issues in much more detail, I do hope that we can keep this in mind. We have no idea what the changes in society will be when all this is over, but of one thing we can be certain;

it won't be then same as it was before. And we must do our best to foster inter-connectedness and to recognise the importance of human kindness. Let me sum up, again with a quotation from Teilhard de Chardin.

*"The day will come when,
after harnessing space,
the winds,
the tides,
and gravitation,
we shall harness for God the
energies of love.
And on that day,
for the second time in the history of
the world,
we shall have discovered fire.'
It's the fire of love, which motivates
the ground state of the universe.*

View from Dalcrombie, the Fenwick's House in Scotland





Pandemic as Opportunity

Ervin Laszlo

A global pandemic is an opportunity for global change - for rapid and effective change to a better world.

Even if some people are depressed and do not see the light at the end of the tunnel, the pandemic we are experiencing is temporary; it will pass into history as all the previous pandemics did. But the change it brings may be lasting. It can be change for the better, or change for the worse. Making it a change for the better is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss.

We are in the midst of a “bifurcation” - the process scientists call a sudden forking in the evolutionary trajectory of a complex dynamic system. We are living the global systems-shift we have discussed and anticipated for years. We have learned a few things about such a shift. It is one-way, it cannot be reversed. But it is not predetermined - it allows choice. In a bifurcation, we can choose the way we go. *For the first time in history, we can consciously and purposefully choose our destiny.* This could be a bright destiny; the dawn of a new era of sanity and flourishing. But whether it will be that is not determined. It is up to us.

Bifurcation creates crisis, and crisis, as we know, is both danger and opportunity. Either way, it is a prelude to change. The challenge is to choose the change that leads to a sane and flourishing world. This is a real but non-recurring opportunity. Failing to seize it means returning to where we have been: facing the prospect of our collective demise. Because for the past several decades we have been exposed to a plethora of crises, and these are likely to be as global as the pandemic, but not necessarily as temporary. They include conditions as bad or worse than a pandemic. For instance:

millions dying of starvation and penury - and through epidemics and violence taking further millions with them. Hordes of displaced refugees tearing apart the fabric of more and more societies. Droughts turning fertile verdant land into arid, lifeless plains. Rising sea levels flooding a third of the human habitations on the planet. Violent storms destroying the homes of rich and poor alike. And local conflicts escalating into regional wars and turning into a global nuclear confrontation. The list could be extended, but the conclusion is clear. The unsustainable processes we have created could reach fateful tipping points - points of irreversibility. We either learn to live sanely and sustainably, or we leave the stage of history. This is a lesson we have learned on the level of theory. Now we are facing it in practice.

Returning to business as usual, to the norms and practices and the values and assumptions of the past, would be suicidal. Fortunately, it is not possible. This is just as well: another way is now open for us. The social, economic, political, and cultural systems that have been framing our life have been shaken to their roots. Disruptive change happened, and it is a prelude to fundamental change, whether constructive or destructive.

In a way, *the pandemic is a blessing in disguise*. It made us realise that we are a single global family: an interdependent and either co-evolving or co-devolving living system. If we fail to make good use of the opportunity this gifts us, we expose ourselves to a plethora of crises. But if we make good use of it, we can create a better world.

There is an important lesson to learn here. In his Inaugural Address, president Franklin D. Roosevelt told us that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. Applied to the condition of the world today, this conveys a relevant and true message. *We can build a better world if we stop being fearful. A better world is available to us; it is waiting to be built. There is nothing to fear but fear itself.*

What is it then, that we need to do? It is clear that we need to think constructively - dare to hope, and dare to act to realise our hope. But we also need to act differently; act as if we were part of the web of life on the planet. Because we are that, even if most of us neither realise nor act like it. We have been harming the planet, and so harming ourselves. We have ignored the interdependence and ultimate oneness of life. *We need to adopt better goals.* It is not "our people, our nation first" - not even all of humanity first. It is the web of life first, as it exists and evolves on Earth. When that web is safe and sound, we are safe and sound. Then we can flourish, instead of having to fight crisis after crisis.

Our body is healthy when it is whole, and the body of humanity is healthy when it is whole - when it embraces and values all the beings that walk the Earth. We know this, and we have always known it. But in the modern world we have suppressed this knowledge, buried it in our desperate scramble for money and power. We have used the fabulous fruits of the human genius mainly to achieve short-term mercenary ends. We have developed amazing energy and information technologies, and are using them single-mindedly, to achieve our ends without regard for the consequences. As a result, our technologies respond to our short-term wants, but are indifferent to our long-term needs.

Some of our technologies have developed a life of their own. They are shaping human life and the human world. This is a dangerous development: it could lead to a variety of "collateral damages" - even to the creation of quasi-living organisms such as malignant viruses.



We must ensure that our technologies are safe, and that they serve our needs. This means achieving a healthy balance that allows all life on Earth to flourish in harmony. It is a monumental task, but in tackling it we need not rely only on the limited wisdom of our authorities and institutions. *Our real guidance does not come from above and beyond - it comes from within and below.* It is the guidance deriving from our sense of who we are, and how we relate to each other and to nature. The authority we can and should follow is deep and wise. *It is our own deep self.* Being a part of the web of life, whatever force or impetus forms and informs that web is "in" us - it is in our conscious and in our subconscious mind. And so, instinctively and intuitively we know that life is not just a jungle where the strongest survive, but a system of mutual harmonisation, guided by empathy, a sense of belonging, and ultimately by unconditional love. This is not just what religious prophets and spiritual masters are telling us today; it is what down-to-earth quantum physicists, quantum biologists, and transpersonal psychologists are saying.

The guidance of our inner self is healthy, far healthier than the relentless pursuit of riches and power. We are social beings, and we can live like such beings. Living like

that is good for us, and good for the world. *Living in harmony with others and with nature is healthier, happier, and more rewarding than chasing after self-centered short-term satisfactions.*

When it comes to deciding the ways of our life and the path to our destiny, there is a new bottom line. We can take our life and our destiny into our own hands. We can *be* the change we wish to see in the world. *In a global bifurcation, we are masters of our destiny.* This we must realise, and this we must put into practice. Our health, our wellbeing, and our very survival depends on it.

We can thank the pandemic for opening the way to a global transformation. Now the way is open to creating a better world, a world that lives up to the power and the potential of the human spirit. When the pandemic subsides and passes into history, creating a better world will be our epochal task. There has never been a more exciting or more important task in the history of humankind.

*Prof Ervin Laszlo is Founder and President of the Club of Budapest; Founder and Director of the Laszlo Institute of New Paradigm Research; his most recent book is *Reconnecting to the Source* (St. Martin's Press, New York, 2020).*



Richard Z Cheng, MD, PhD

Early Large Dose Intravenous Vitamin C is the Treatment of Choice for 2019-nCov Pneumonia

Richard Z Cheng, MD, PhD; Hanping Shi, MD, PhD; Atsuo Yanagisawa, MD, PhD; Thomas Levy, MD, JD; Andrew Saul, PhD.

I emailed Richard Cheng after seeing his recent online presentation to the NIH and other reports from the front line in China. An updated version of this article was published in Medicine in Drug Discovery (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.medidd.2020.100028> - there is also a compilation of 90 peer-reviewed articles entitled Vitamin C evidence for treating complications of COVID-19 and other viral infections – this can be sourced on the Internet but let me know if you would like the link.

The 2019-nCov (coronavirus) epidemic originated in Wuhan, China and is now spreading to many other continents and countries, causing a public fear. Worst of all, there is no vaccine or specific antiviral drugs for 2019-nCov available. This adds to the public fear and gloomy outlook. A quick, rapidly deployable and accessible, effective and also safe treatment is urgently needed to not only save those patients, to curtail the spread of the epidemic, but also very important in the psychological assurance to people worldwide, and to the Chinese in particular. Acute organ failure, especially pulmonary failure (**acute respiratory distress syndrome, ARDS**) is the key mechanism for 2019-nCov's fatality. Significantly increased oxidative stress due to the rapid release of free radicals and cytokines etc. is the hallmark of ARDS which leads to cellular injury, organ failure and death. Early use of large dose antioxidants, especially **vitamin C (VC)**, therefore, plays a key role in the management of these patients. We call upon all those in the leadership, and those providing direct assistance patients, to bravely and rapidly apply large dose **intravenous vitamin C (IVC)** to help those patients and to stop this epidemic.

2019-nCov is a rapidly developing epidemic with a high morbidity and mortality.

Wang et al reports 26% ICU admission rate and a 4.3% mortality rate in their 138 confirmed cases [1]. Chen et al report that out of 99 confirmed 2019-nCov patients, 17 (17%) patients developed ARDS and, among them, 11 (11%) patients worsened in a short period of time and died of multiple organ failure.

Increased oxidative stress, an underlying "cytokine storm," leads to ARDS which is the key pathology of high mortality of these pandemic viral infections. Cytokine storm-induced ARDS is the key pathology leading to death of these patients [2]. Intravenous vitamin C effectively counters oxidative stress.

Cytokine storm

Coronaviruses and influenza are among the pandemic viruses that can cause lethal lung injuries and death from ARDS [3]. Viral infections cause a "cytokine storm" that can activate lung capillary endothelial cells leading to neutrophil infiltration and increased oxidative stress (reactive oxygen and nitrogen species) that further damages lung barrier function [3]. ARDS, which is characterized by severe hypoxemia, is usually accompanied by uncontrolled inflammation, oxidative injury, and the damage to the alveolar-capillary barrier [4]. The increased oxidative stress is a major insult in pulmonary injury such as acute lung injury (ALI) and acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), two clinical manifestations of acute respiratory failure with substantially high morbidity and mortality [5,6].

In a report of 29 patients confirmed of 2019-nCov pneumonia patients, 27 (93%) showed increased hsCRP, a marker of inflammation (and oxidative stress) [7]. Transcription factor nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (Nrf2) is a major regulator of antioxidant response element- (ARE-) driven cytoprotective protein expression. The activation of Nrf2 signaling plays an essential role in preventing cells and tissues from injury induced by oxidative stress. Vitamin C is an essential element of the antioxidant system in cellular response [8].

Part of vitamin C's biological effects in critical care management are well reviewed in a recent article by Nabzdyk and Bittner from Mass Gen Hospital of Harvard Medical School on World's Journal of Critical Care Medicine [9]:

Antioxidants, especially large dose IV vitamin C (IVC) in the management of ARDS.

It's clear that increased oxidative stress plays a major role in the pathogenesis of ARDS and death. Cytokine storm is observed in both viral and bacterial infections [3]. Cytokine storm leads to increased oxidative stress, ARDS and death seems to be a common and non-specific pathway. This is important in clinical management. Since the prevention and management targeting increased oxidative stress with large dose of antioxidants

seems a logical step and can be applied to these deadly pandemics, without the lengthy waiting for pathogen-specific vaccines and drugs, as is the case of the current 2019-nCov epidemic.

As a matter of fact, large dose intravenous vitamin C (IVC) has been used clinically successfully in viral ARDS and also in influenza [10]. Fowler et al described a 26-year-old woman developed viral ARDS (rhinovirus and enterovirus-D68) [3]. She was admitted to ICU. After failure to routine standard management, she was placed on ECMO on day 3. High dose IVC (200mg/kg body/24 hour, divided in 4 doses, one every 6 hours) was also started on ECMO day 1. Her lungs showed significant improvement on day 2 of high dose IVC infusion on X-ray imaging. She continued to improve on ECMO and IVC and ECMO was discontinued on ECMO day 7 and the patient recovered and was discharged from the hospital on hospital day 12, without the need of supplemental oxygen. One month later, X-ray of her lungs showed complete recovery. Gonzalez et al (including one of the authors, Thomas Levy) reported recently a severe case of influenza successfully treated with high dose IVC [10]. 25-year-old MG developed flu-like symptoms which was rapidly deteriorating to the degree that, about 2 weeks later, the patient barely had the energy to use the toilet. He was placed on high dose IVC (50,000 mg of vitamin C in 1000 ml Ringer's solution, infused over 90 minutes). The patient immediately reported significant improvement the next day. On day 4 of IVC infusion he reported to feel normal. He continued oral VC (2,000 mg twice daily) [10]. Another story has been widely circulating on the social media that large dose IVC reportedly was used in 2009 to save a New Zealand farmer, Alan Smith (Primal Panacea). One of us (Thomas Levy) was consulted upon in this case [11] [12]. Hemila et al reported that vitamin C shortens ICU stay in their 2019 meta-analysis of 18 clinical studies with a total of 2004 ICU patients on the journal Nutrients [13]. In this report, 17,000 mg/day IVC shortened the ICU stay by 44%. Marik et al reported their use of IVC in 47 sepsis ICU cases. They

found a significant reduction in mortality rate in the IVC group of patients [14].

Dietary antioxidants (vitamin C and sulforaphane) were shown to reduce oxidative-stress-induced acute inflammatory lung injury in patients receiving mechanical ventilation [15]. Other antioxidants (curcumin) have also been shown to have promising anti-inflammatory potential in pneumonia [16].

High dose IVC has been clinically used for several decades and a recent NIH expert panel document states clearly that high dose IVC (1.5 g/kg body weight) is safe and without major side effects [17].

Summary

2019-nCoV pneumonia is a rapidly developing disease with high morbidity and mortality rate. The key pathogenesis is the acute lung injury causing ARDS and death. Coronaviruses, influenza viruses and many other pandemic viral infections are usually associated with an increase oxidative stress leading to oxidative cellular damage resulting in multi-organ failure. Antioxidants administration therefore has a central role in the management of these conditions, in addition to the standard conventional supportive therapies. Preliminary clinical studies and case reports show that early administration of high dose IVC can improve clinical conditions of patients in ICU, ARDS and flu. It needs to be pointed that pandemics like 2019-nCoV will happen in the future. Specific vaccines and antiviral drugs R&D take long time to develop and are not available for the current nCoV epidemic and won't be ready when the next pandemic strikes. IVC and other antioxidants are universal agents for ARDS that can be rapidly applied clinically. Given that high dose IVC is safe, can be effective, we call on the involved leadership and healthcare professionals to look into high dose IVC without further delay. More clinical studies of the IVC and oral VC (such as liposomal-encapsulated VC) are needed to develop standard protocols for the current use and future uses are urgently needed. We hope when the next pandemic strikes, we won't be so helpless and we'll be ready.

For further reading

Coronavirus Patients in China to be Treated with High-Dose Vitamin C <http://orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/v16n10.shtml> As of the date of publication of this Orthomolecular Medicine News service Release, Dr. Cheng is in Wuhan facilitating IVC treatment for hospitalized coronavirus patients.

Vitamin C and its Application to the Treatment of nCoV Coronavirus <http://orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/v16n09.shtml>

Hospital-based Intravenous Vitamin C Treatment for Coronavirus and Related Illnesses <http://orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/v16n07.shtml>

Nutritional Treatment of Coronavirus <http://orthomolecular.org/resources/omns/v16n06.shtml>

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Ideas Arising from an Exchange with William Ophuls

John Reed

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18)

*Six years ago, after reading his book **Immoderate Greatness. Why Civilisations Fail**, I had a brief exchange with scholar and environmentalist William Ophuls that I reproduced in my book **Time is Running Out. Reflections on the Modern World**. What I learned then (and have since better understood) is that we both predicate the survival of civilisation and, perhaps, humanity itself, on the evolution of human consciousness from the secular to the spiritual. EDITORIAL NOTE: See reviews of both books below.*

There are many reasons for coming to this conclusion but perhaps the most striking one is witnessing the degree to which the human psyche is currently under duress and has clearly reached the limits of what it can tolerate in its present de-spiritualised condition. Depression and mental illness - in epidemic proportions in the West - are only the more apparent symptoms of the emptiness of life dedicated to egoic self-interest alone. But the inner corrosion goes far deeper. Many years ago, in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* C.G. Jung wrote... "The decisive question for man is: Is he related to something infinite or not?" We are now in a position to answer that question. Without defining what it is in precise terms, all the evidence at hand points to the fact that we are intimately connected to the infinite and that this connection is what defines us as human beings. How do we know this? Because a lingering inner emptiness (that, at times, take the form of bitterness and anger) accompanies us the length of our lives where there is a failure to make that connection....and, increasing prosperity, counter-intuitively, is causing this condition to metastasise across the planet.

And this should come as no surprise. 2600 years ago, in his Four Noble Truths, the Buddha came to this realisation and proposed an Eightfold Path as a means of remedying the existential discomfort that he called 'dukkha' (Sanskrit for suffering). Five hundred years later, Jesus Christ inferred as much when he told us that "Man does not live by bread alone" (Mathew 4:4). In fact, the essential message of all the spiritual teachings since the dawn of time, in one form or another, is to tell us that we are made in the image of a universal intelligence/energy that we refer to as 'God' (for want of a better word to describe the indescribable) and the meaning and purpose of existence is to recognise and abide by that truth. Jesus and Buddha concur in saying that when we surrender our egoic selves, we will be 'set free' from the bondage of illusion that prevents us from being 'whole', which is to say, from being who we are in essence. This is so fundamental a truth that everyday experience reveals that we are either the beneficiaries of that reality or the victims of ignoring it. Furthermore, the suffering, strife and discord that constitutes the story of humankind is all the evidence we need to know that we have disregarded this fact for far too long.

Losing your soul

The problem is that for millennia, having dispensed with this message, we conducted our lives, first in survival mode, and later, when the material quality of life on earth improved, in the ceaseless pursuit of our individual and collective self-interest. This was the principal 'motif' of what I referred to in my book as the 'egoic consciousness'. And during this whole time there has been little digression from that path. Where has it now taken us? In the last 250 years under the auspices of the system of economic organisation we call capitalism - a system designed almost exclusively to furthering our egoic aims - the material and technological progress we have made has been nothing short of spectacular. This success, however, has come at an inordinate price. Jesus asked the fundamental question we should now be asking ourselves: "what does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he loses his soul?" (Mark 8:36) Obfuscated by the material gains that have been made, this Faustian bargain has come at enormous cost. In fact, the price of losing our collective souls as we pursue our egoic ends, is almost incalculable. Not only does it destroy us from within, robbing us of so much that makes life potentially beautiful but it has put us on a collision course with respect to the environment that has now been taken to such an extreme that the delicate geophysical parameters that permitted the human race to exist on this planet in the first place, are in the process of being modified... with possibly irreversible consequences.

In the search for an explanation for this folly, it is important to understand that if our history is one of violence and oppression and if we are now jeopardising the favourable climactic conditions we have enjoyed until now and that may not be available to our grandchildren, it is because 'we know not what we do', as Jesus stated. This is the nature of human consciousness when it is disconnected from its spiritual roots. But what gives particular urgency to what is happening in the world right now is that we are for the first time *simultaneously* arriving at the limit, not only of what the planet can withstand if it is to remain habitable in the future but also of what our humanity can tolerate without the destruction of

everything that makes us human. William Ophuls rightly identifies hubris (a figment of the egoic consciousness) as the principal villain. It has brought down all prior civilisations, he explains, and, in an entirely predictable manner is now doing so again.

In his more recent book (appropriately titled, *Apologies to the Grandchildren*) he sombrely concludes that..."Civilisation is, by its very nature a long-running Ponzi scheme. It lives by robbing nature and borrowing from the future.... While it still lives, it generates a temporary and fictitious surplus that it uses to enrich and empower the few and to dispossess and dominate the many. Industrial civilisation is the apotheosis and quintessence of this fatal course. A fortunate minority gains luxuries and freedoms galore, but only by slaughtering, poisoning and exhausting creation." In a similar vein and as far back as the early 70's, Ivan Illich considered that by the abandonment of our souls we had become 'inmates in a technological asylum' diminished by an inner desolation and the addictive needs that technology itself creates. The alarming thing to note is that when he made that statement 50 years ago only the tip of the iceberg had appeared. Our condition has become far worse since then.

Technotopia?

Of course, not everyone will agree with this view. Many scientists, rationalists and non-believers would consider that (aside from the inconvenience of climate change) we are living in a time of extraordinary promise. Having given us the miracle of the Internet, technology now rains down on us a cornucopia of 'indispensable' gadgetry, along with a vista of endless possibilities brought about by the digital revolution underway. This widely-held secular faith in technology (dubbed the Singularity) embraces the belief that we will find a technological 'fix' for all our problems. Rising to a crescendo of optimism, we can look forward to a future determined by computing power a thousand times more powerful than the human brain that will provide us with an artificial form of 'intelligence' (AI) greatly surpassing our own that, for many of us, will render work in the traditional sense, obsolete.

In the fullness of time it is believed, we will enjoy a technological utopia of gadget-laden homes, driverless

(and, eventually, flying) cars, the colonisation of space, bio-engineered babies of our choice, in-vitro cloned food, endless leisure and life spans of 200 years! Such a breath-taking prospect, however, did not prevent Stephen Hawking, a scientist himself, from sensing the obvious derangement of such a vision and declaring, on the contrary" that we are at the most dangerous point in human history!"

It is incomprehensible that a supposedly intelligent, numerous and influential segment of society can handily overlook the evident challenges humankind faces in its fast deteriorating psychospiritual condition and entertain the notion that such a prospect is not only possible but desirable for humanity. It is, however, a striking indication of how dangerously distanced we have become from our souls and how pressing is the need to re-connect to the infinite. What is demonstrably wrong about these delusional reveries is that they don't hold up, even in a scientific sense. Not only is the impossibility of infinite growth of this nature on a finite planet a well-established cliché but the ravages of entropy (resulting from the Second Law of Thermodynamics) will not permit a 'machine civilisation' or even a 'digital civilisation' to endure. And even if it did, as Ophuls points out..."humanity might survive, but it would no longer be recognisably human."

What can we do?

At this late hour, is there a remedy for a world threatened by climate change, the end of fossil energy, our fragile psychological condition and the likely systemic collapse of a global financial system that has become a casino for the rich fuelled by central bank money creation and financial sleight of hand? There is much risk here. The unbridled thirst for profit we are witnessing today has turned the world of finance into an insufficiently regulated free-for-all; wildly over-leveraged, global, dangerously interdependent and, as a result of the cascade of money creation from nowhere (euphemistically referred to as Quantitative Easing) untenable and now almost virtual. As a result, industrial civilisation finds itself in a terrible quandary. "It cannot continue moving forward for very much longer, because it is encountering multiple physical, biological, economic, and systemic

limits to growth Nor can industrial society stand still, because its political, economic and social viability requires continuous growth”, Ophuls writes.

So what can be done and how?

Small is beautiful

My conviction, shared by William Ophuls, is that egoic overreach must urgently be tempered by moderation and a vision of life animated by the notion that ‘small is beautiful’. What does such a vision imply? Nothing less than the (spiritual) transition to a non-egoic state (outlined briefly in my book) of wanting less, being less (ambitious, proud and competitive, that is), sharing more and discovering for the first time that the aesthetics of frugality and ‘rigueur’ (moral discipline) are sources of joy, dignity and fulfilment. The dynamic of wanting more but giving less and less value to the more we have (the case at present and the source of the wasteful abundance that exists) would be replaced by its opposite, needing less but attributing greater value to the little we have. Contrary to what most people believe, human happiness and satisfaction are birthed at such moments.

The transformation in human attitudes I have just described, is, of course, of a spiritual nature. You don’t arrive at such a vision by means of reason or conventional good sense alone. Unfortunately, this is not and never has been a given. On the contrary, this understanding of life is predicated on a degree of self-awareness that is comparatively rare and an ‘awakeness’ that infuses all we do with a particular kind of meaning. For this reason, the words ‘chopping wood and carrying water’, highlighting two menial, quotidian tasks, have come to symbolize Zen Buddhism and the essential simplicity of a spiritual life. In practical terms and with respect to our present situation, it would mean discarding the superfluous and adopting a less complex, less technological, more localised way of living characterised by acquiring skills that enable us to take more direct responsibility for our needs. Ophuls describes this as follows .. “If they want to thrive, or even survive, our grandchildren will need to be like the tough, hard working, cooperative, Jacks and Jills-of-all-trades that built industrial civilisation in the first place. However, even more than technical skills and practical knowledge, *the right mindset will be critical.*” (my

italics) In my book I have given a particular definition to that last sentence. Taking Charles Darwin’s statement “It is not the most intelligent of the species that survive. It is the ones most adaptable to change,” I have suggested that, given the circumstances we would be likely to face in the future, ‘those most adaptable to change’ would be the men and women with the necessary spiritual resources.

In the meantime, I would like to suggest that there is something going on in the world that is both mysterious and oddly promising. Good and bad now stand in stark opposition to each other. This polarisation, I sense, is not arbitrary; it is necessary and beneficial. To paraphrase William Butler Yeats, ‘Things fall apart: the centre cannot hold, the worst are full of passionate intensity..... the best, however, are NOT lacking in conviction’. This is a harbinger of hope. In the richest and most unequal society on earth (the United States), witness the herculean combat for social justice of 78 year-old contender for the democratic nomination, Bernie Sanders. Choosing to sacrifice a well-deserved retirement, his health and possibly, his life (he has already had one heart attack), this valiant old fighter is giving every ounce of energy he possesses to tackle the ills that are destroying the fabric of American society. If he is nominated and wins the forthcoming election, it will be a game-changer that will reverberate across the world. We must pray for this.

In the balance

When expressing his reaction to good or bad news, Zen master Hakuin (1686) would answer by saying... ‘maybe yes, maybe no’... suggesting that we can rarely interpret the deeper meaning of events as they occur. Let me take three examples. Could the depredations of Donald Trump be the price we pay for the emergence of someone like Bernie Sanders as a presidential candidate or, for that matter, the remarkable Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez and her ‘Green New Deal’? Will the coronavirus spreading across the world (as I write) oblige us to re-evaluate the merits of globalisation and the precariously inter-dependent world of business and commerce? And, by extension, will sinking stock markets make us take a new look at the workings of capitalism? Without our lethargic approach

to climate change, would we have Greta Thunberg? Could it be that the sheep are now arriving in wolfs clothing? One thing is certain, business-as-usual is a discredited and spent force, the culmination of thousands of years of human egoism, a flaying beast on its last legs. For this reason, we are witnessing a crucial moment in human history. The pressure on mankind to alter course is growing by the day. The need for change is now palpable and more and more people are answering the call (some even in the form I have described above). Whether they are too few, too late or whether the few today will become the many tomorrow is impossible to know.

Addressing his grandchildren directly, Ophuls writes... “We live in a civilisation that produces goods in abundance but not the Good..... So we bequeath you the monumental task of re-establishing civilisation on principles that are sane, humane, and ecological..... Be inspired by the beauty of the cosmos to invent a way of being devoted to feeding the soul Rediscover the spiritual abundance that reside in material simplicity. Learn again that the only wealth worth having lies in the treasury of the human heart... While we have left you with little in the way of resources, your task is not hopeless. *in the end civilisation is not something material, it is spiritual.*” (my italics).

I wholeheartedly agree with every word.

By way of expressing my own feelings and intuitions about what lies ahead, I would like to end this essay with these few words from an unknown source.

‘What the caterpillar thinks is the end of the world,

The butterfly knows is only the beginning.’

Over a span of fifty years, John Reed has had a keen interest in the spiritual traditions of East and West. In his books, he has emphasised the need to banish the barrier separating the secular from the spiritual. It is now time, he believes, to recognise that ‘spirituality’ has an immediate and practical application to our everyday lives and will be an increasingly vital resource as the effects of climate change and the ever more precarious socio-political conditions of society oblige us to alter the way we live. He divides his time between the United States and France.



The Light of Hellenism

Dr Athena Despoina Potari

Summary

In Ancient Hellenic language, 'El' stands for the Light of Being - or spiritual Light. As its root-syllable expresses, (H) El-lenism is a worldview, a civilisation and a spiritual tradition which centers around the ontology and practice of Light. The Sciences, and above all Philosophy, are methodical routes towards self-liberation and the realisation of Light. Focusing around the notions of eros and universal consciousness, Hellenism is, in its very essence, a path of Enlightenment.

Hellenism

What most people know about Hellenism is that this ancient civilisation, born in the heart of the Mediterranean, is the cultural cradle of western civilisation. Its heritage is marked by an impressive devotion to scientific research and the pioneering commitment to Reason or *Logos* - notions which it invented. All of the above justify its status as the birthplace of sciences, but also politics, democracy, and of course, Philosophy.

Beyond its more well-known descriptions, however, what many people don't know about Hellenism is that its tradition developed over thousands of years in an on-going co-creative dialogue and exchange with the numerous Eastern traditions of the pre-Christian world. The Hellene sages held strong ties with their Egyptian, Persian, Babylonian, Hindu and Buddhist counterparts. Pythagoras, for example, was educated in the revered esoteric schools of Egypt, where he served as a high priest for 22 years, then studied next to

Persian magi in Babylon for another 12 years, before starting his debut as a spiritual teacher in Greece and southern Italy.

In addition, what is also not widely acknowledged is that Hellenism's core concept of Reason (*Logos*) - so highly acclaimed in our modern discourses and their correlated political societies - has little to do with its parochial anachronistic interpretation as a mind-based faculty or discursive abstraction resting upon the use of purely rational and linearly logical methods. Reason as *Logos*, in its original sense, refers to the essence or substance of Consciousness that everything is made up of and which permeates the entirety of cosmic creation (alike the notion of *Atma*). Epistemologically, it is a state of consciousness beyond discursive knowledge, where individual experience merges with the all-pervasive wisdom of being. Despite its linguistic affinity, *Logos* is at once the defiance, the transcendence *as well as* the culmination of 'logic'. Its essential meaning cannot be more conveniently described but as universal Consciousness revealed to us *through* and *as* non-dual, unified, awareness.

A few intriguing repercussions follow from the above. First, if Hellenism is used (as it widely is) as the cultural and epistemic landmark demarcating the West from the East, then we evidently stumble upon the very exciting, radically subversive, realisation that the myth of the West-East division is severely undermined once we start delving deeper into the purported root-tradition of the West. A closer study into the precepts and history

of Hellenism reveals that whatever we think of as the cradle of Western civilisation is integrally constituted by what we consider as the *sine quo non* of the East: Spirituality and the possibility of Awakening. A more thorough exploration unveils that this tradition is another fascinating, albeit unique, variation of the spiritual teachings of awakening, divine devotion, purification, virtue, non-duality and self-realisation that we find in abundance in spiritual traditions of the so-called East. With that understanding, the East-West divide collapses.

Second, since *Logos* - as the realisation of Being or universal consciousness - dwells at the heart of science (*episteme*) and philosophy, then the widely held view of philosophy as a rational, argumentative, arm-chair vocation removed from direct experience appears as an outdated caricature. In fact, what we nowadays refer to as 'the philosopher' is closer to what the ancients referred to as 'the sophist.' The sophist is the detached scholar who compares, juxtaposes and analytically dissects concepts, trying to rationally grasp that which transcends fragmented rationality, "using the power of persuasive speech" to construct "discursive semblances, or phantasms, of true being", without having any direct experience of being itself (Plato, *Sophist*, 234c). On the other hand, the philosopher, in the original sense of the term, is the eros-struck seeker who works actively for her purification (*catharsis*), awakening and ongoing integration, using not only *logos* but, very importantly, intuition or divinely inspired insight (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244- 245)

intimately experiencing the nature of being; she walks on the “path of initiation” until she reaches “the ultimate revelation to which the philosophical teachings lead: the vast ocean” of oneness (Plato, *Symposium* 210d).

Therefore, Hellenism is essentially a *spiritual* tradition of equal caliber as Yoga, Advaita Vedanta, Tantra or any other practice of self-realisation. Hellenic philosophy, which literally means ‘*the state of falling in love with wisdom*’, is an intimate, self-transformative, experiential path towards awakening to the unity of all experience and the experience of that unity as one’s true Self.

The Light ~ EL (ΕΛ)

The View

“He who has been instructed thus far in the *path of eros*, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he reaches towards the end, he will *suddenly* come to *view* a nature of wondrous beauty: a nature which is everlasting; which is not born nor perishes, which does not grow nor decay, which neither waxes nor wanes; a beauty which is not beautiful from one point of view and ugly from another, nor sometimes beautiful and sometimes not, nor beautiful in relation to *this* and ugly in relation to *that*, nor beautiful here and ugly there, nor beautiful for some and ugly for others. Neither will this beauty appear to him in the likeness of a face or hands or any other bodily part; nor as any form of speech, or knowledge, or science, nor as existing in any other being, such as for example, in an animal, or in earth or in heaven, or in any other place; but only *it*, in itself, by itself, eternal singular being, absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, and all other things beautiful (are so because they) in some way partake in it, such that when they come-to-be and perish away, *that* neither increases nor diminishes, nor changes and nothing happens to it. He who from these beautiful things, ascending in the path of true eros, begins to perceive *that* beauty, is not far from the end. This, my dear Socrates (...) is that life above all

others which man should live.”¹

That is how Socrates’ teacher - Diotima, a *female teacher*, a priestess and well-known ‘shaman’ of her times - summarises the philosophical path: as a path of eros, beauty and goodness. In Greek, ‘*kalos*’ (which is the word used for ‘beautiful’) means both *beautiful* and *benevolent*. Divinity, Benevolence and Beauty coincide as the one and the same ‘thing’ (which is a no-thing): they are the main qualities of Being itself.

The path of philosophy is a path of *eros* and light.

The quest of self-realisation is here presented, essentially, as a love affair - a *divine* love affair (*‘erotiki pedagogy’*). It is a relationship of *eros*, where *eros* means ‘merging’, and merging implies the dissolution of all separation, the vanishing of duality. The process of this affair involves an ever-increasing expansion of the radius of one’s *eros*, until that circle of love comes to include and encompass everything. The philosopher is patiently trained to be in love *with everything*, because the ultimate intimacy emerging from merging with everything is the realisation of oneness. Through successive ascensions in the quality of *eros* that the philosopher experiences, the end-goal is reached *suddenly, unexpectedly, in the strike of a lightning*: the spiritual seeker reaches “the *view* of the vast sea of Beauty (the Good)”.

No words can really describe this experience. “We are talking about an inconceivable, *indescribable* beauty” (*Republic*, 509). Socrates’ description reminds us of the notion of Tao “that cannot be told”; “the nameless” which is “the beginning of heaven and earth”. The experience of this ‘view’, in Greek, is called ‘*theoria*’, what we nowadays call - only homonymously - ‘theory’.

Theoria: ‘*theon oro*’ - which means, I see (*oro*) the Divine (*theon*). *Theoria* means ascending to the View of the Divine, where the veil of ignorance drops and the cosmic play is revealed as what it is: the miraculous, mysterious, ever indescribable play of Oneness.

Nothing around changes, nothing is gained or lost, nothing *happens*, but this one event, which is, really, a ‘non-event’: a shift in perspective; and not even a *shift*; a perspective, a view, simply *is* - revealed.

In and from that view, what I *see*, as *experiencing*, or *experience as a form of seeing*, is the stripping away of all knowledge, all science, all objects; the very self, its sensations and the objects of its sensations, all dissolve into a “a vast ocean” of “singular being” which “always is” “in-itself, by-itself”, and which ‘feels’ like an “ocean of pristine beauty”. This is the view/experience of Being, ‘the Good’, or Divinity in-itself.

Aristotle refers to this Divinity (God or First Principle) as Universal Consciousness which is in a pure state of being aware of (being aware of) itself: it is pure energy of self-awareness (*noesis noiseos*) (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1074 20-1075). He also identifies it as the ‘prime cause’ or ‘prime mover’: that which perpetually sets everything in motion, therefore in existence, therefore in life. And why does ‘it’ do so? What is the motivation or end-goal behind Divinity’s activity as a prime mover setting into motion, thereby manifesting, existence?

Aristotle’s explanation is at once astonishing and completely mystical: the prime mover moves in order to be *the beloved* - in order to be the object of *eros* (“*os eromenon*”). Consciousness’ teleology is entirely erotic. It manifests the world in order to merge back to itself by self-realising as pure love.

The love affair of philosophy, as seeking of knowledge, leads the devoted lover beyond knowledge, beyond science, beyond subject and object duality, to a view of Being as consciousness-aware-of-itself. The end of Eros is the view of and the merging within the vastness of Being. But, aporetically, the end-goal of Being manifesting itself, is *also eros, eros for itself - the divine self-eros of Divinity*. Does the philosopher substantiate the teleology of cosmic manifestation? Is our urge for merging with oneness, an expression of oneness?

urge for merging with - or returning to - itself? Or is perhaps our eros for Being, Being's eros for itself, since we and it are one? Eros is the thread that unites the outward movement of Being with the returning to its source; it is the thread of Unity between One and All. It is the energy of universal consciousness.

Eros as Light and Seeing

The path of philosophy is a path of eros and *light*.

According to Orphic Theology, Eros is Light. He springs forth from the unfathomable vastness of 'Chaos', which symbolically represents the primordial 'void', the amorphous, undifferentiated unmanifest state of Being. Eros is here referred to as '*Phanitas*'. This term comes from the root syllable '*pha*' (literally meaning light, - hence the terms, phenomena qua appearances, *photography*, *Pharaoh*) and stands for the 'appearer', the 'manifest' or, more broadly speaking, that which initiates cosmic manifestation as appearance. The essence of manifestation as appearance is Light.

Eros is *Phanitas*: the revealer of Light, the Light Bearer. It is that 'force' or modality of being which mediates between the unmanifest and the manifest. Before it manifests into seemingly differentiated appearances, Being is already the womb or birthplace of light, but in itself amorphous, beyond manifestation, beyond light - truly, beyond description. Eros reveals the vastness of being ("*chaos*") into a vast ocean of light ("*phaos*"). All forms that come to be are merely spectacles of light. Even what we call matter is light, but only in a (seemingly) denser form.

To come in contact with the light as the essence of being is to arrive at experiential knowledge, in the sense of *gnosis* (higher spiritual knowledge). This idea is remarkably similar the notion of '*vidya*' in Sanskrit: to *see* is to *know*.

Plato's Sun Analogy

Plato establishes the inherent interconnectedness between light, seeing and *gnosis* (as the direct



experience of *logos*) through his famous Simile of the Sun in the *Republic* (507a-509c). Seeing is here compared to 'knowing' (i.e. spiritual understanding) and the Sun is compared to Being, or the form of 'the Good'.

In the visible world of sensory experience "the power of seeing and of being seen necessitates the existence of a third 'species': light" (507e). The source of light is the sun: "the eye draws its power of seeing from the sun, as something that emanates from him". "The sun is not itself sight, nor is it identical with what we call the eye in which sight resides; it is the cause of sight and becomes seen by the sight which itself causes" (508b).

In a manner of analogy, the same triangular constellation of relationships exists between (i) Being or 'the Good' - which is, metaphorically speaking, the 'Sun' of the spiritual/ intelligible realm; (ii) the 'eye of the soul', which refers to the soul's knowing capacity; and (iii) the intelligible objects of spiritual knowledge.

Being or 'the Good' provides the power of knowing to the soul, and at the same time, imparts truth, meaning and *intelligibility* to that which can be known. It relates to *knowing* and the objects of spiritual knowledge in the same way as the physical sun relates to vision and visual objects. Just as the eyes cannot see in the absence of the sun, likewise the soul cannot have a genuine understanding of experience unless it is exposed to Being. Yet, as with visual perception, a third

'species' is required, a kind of mediating 'ether': an invisible or spiritual *Light* that both imparts consciousness with a content and awakens or enables spiritual awareness to arise. Plato refers to this 'intelligible' Light as '*aletheia*' - truth: Truth is the Light of Being.

Just as light and seeing resemble the sun, but are not identical with it, similarly knowledge and the light of truth resemble Being, but are not identical with Being. Being illumines the spiritual realm, it is the source of truth (as light/consciousness) and knowledge (as seeing/*vidya*), but itself 'extends' beyond them.

Truth as the Light of Being

Plato's teachings on the sun-likeness of Being, are also encoded in the first vessel of sacred teachings - the Hellenic script. There we find perhaps the first articulation of the ontology of Light, which is so central to Hellenism.

Particularly, three key syllables serve to express the different 'modalities' or the tripartite stratification of Light: Al (AA) which stands for the unmanifest light; El (EA) which stands for (invisible) spiritual light, or the manifest light of Being; and Il (HA), which stands for solar light (hence the word *helios*). As we saw, the visible light (HA) is at once a reflection and an analogy of the invisible light - Truth (EA). In its turn, the light of being is in some way a reflection and an analogy of the all-containing void, the unmanifest light of pure consciousness (AA).

According to the Hellenic tradition, therefore, truth is a form of spiritual light. Similar to the nature of light, truth does not manifest as anything in *particular* (e.g. a particular set of 'laws' or 'precepts'), yet it is 'in' everything that is revealed to us as awareness. It transcends concepts and words, for it is already that which imparts concepts their meaning, intelligibility, form and energy. No notion can express it thoroughly, because truth is the preexisting substratum on which notions are born. Knowledge (*vidya*), understanding and concepts - all pulsate in an eternal dance of meaning, but only as 'symbols', witnessing that there is something before them, within them, beyond them, invisible and dimensionless, subtle and ever-present, from which they emanate as expressions of the sacred ritual of Consciousness - the Mystery of Being.

As with every light, truth too implies a Fire. The unmanifest light (AA) is on some occasions described by ancient sages as a burning fire - for Socrates, the "Sun of God" and for Heraclitus "the eternally-living Fire" (*αἰζῶν πυρ*). As the mystic Heraclitus (the philosopher of fire), states in one of his sutras (fragment 30):

*This cosmos,
the same for all,
was made neither by gods nor men,
but always was
and is, and will be
Eternally-living Fire
igniting in measure
as by measure burning away.*

The Light of Hellenism

As its core root syllable EI (EA) witnesses, the entire spiritual and epistemic tradition of (h) Ellenism is both linguistically but also *essentially* centered around the concept, the ontology and practice of Light. Its teachings are an initiation into truth, *as the light of Being*, that aim to expand our initially limited experience of the world as an amalgam of sense-perceptions and bridge it with our true nature as consciousness. EA (el) is therefore a beam of light - a light-path - which leads us back from the visible to the invisible, from the emanation to the Source, until the very distinction between the two drops away.



As a child or emanation of the cosmic "*eternally-living*" fire, truth is also a fiery luminosity. It can be experienced, beyond discursive knowledge, through a blazing *eros* with Logos, which purifies the mind and thus enables us to enter into the peaceful citadel of all-encompassing, all-knowing silence. As fire, Truth has the power to ignite our soul, to set it on fire, melting away the bondages of suffering by burning up the illusion of separation. This secret fire swallows up separate identity, *suddenly, unexpectedly, in the strike of a lightning* leading to the experience of our true nature: Pure Love, Oneness, Divinity, Void, Completeness. In one word, *Eudaimonia*.

To realise that the entire ensemble of forms and structures which appear to us as 'the tangible universe' is merely the playful manifestation of the primordial Light of which everything is made; to realise the nature of the world *as light* and experience oneself as that primary light source, which at once manifests *and* permeates all experience - that is the end-goal of philosophy. This is also the meaning of *en-lighten-ment*. But it is also the meaning of *Hellenic*: *Hellenes* are, literally, the ones who have *seen* or *realised* the Light; the seers of Light.

Now we can finally begin to see the message of Hellenism. To be Hellenic has little to do with an ethnic identity; it is not merely a description of a nationality or a culture: above those, it is primarily a *spiritual* description. Hence why Hellenism is said to be 'universal' or 'ecumenical', and why its sages had always sought it to be so.

The Light of Hellenism is a living spiritual path which reminds us that we can all be the seers of Light, because we all *are* the Light of Being.

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Footnotes

- ¹ Plato, Symposium, 210d-211b



What's Wrong with the Perennial Philosophy?

Jules Evans

Aldous Huxley's Perennial Philosophy is a huge influence on the rapidly-growing 'spiritual but not religious' demographic. It's faced serious criticisms, but we can still learn a lot from it.

When I was a teenager, I came across Aldous Huxley's 1945 book, *The Perennial Philosophy*. I was so inspired by its array of mystical jewels, that, like a magpie, I stole it from my school's library. I still have that copy, sitting beside me. Next, I devoured his 1954 book *The Doors of Perception*, and secretly converted to psychedelic mysticism. It was thanks to Aldous that I refused to get confirmed, thanks to him that my friends and I spent our adolescence trying to storm heaven on LSD, with mixed results. Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* has stayed with me through my life. He's been my spirit-grandad. And yet, in the last few years, as I've researched his life, I find myself increasingly arguing with Grandad. What if his philosophy isn't true?

The phrase 'perennial philosophy' was first coined by the Renaissance humanist Agostino Steuco in 1540. It referred to the idea that there is a core of shared wisdom in all religions, and to the attempt by Marsilio Ficino's Neoplatonist school to synthesise that wisdom into one trans-cultural philosophy.

This philosophy, writes Huxley, 'is immemorial and universal.

Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions'.

As Huxley argues, there is a lot of agreement between proponents of classical theism in Platonic, Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Jewish philosophy over three main points: God is unconditioned eternal Being, our consciousness is a reflection or spark of that, and we can find our flourishing or bliss in the realisation of this.

But what about Buddhism's theory of *anatta*, or 'no self'? Huxley suggests the Buddha meant the ordinary ego doesn't exist, but there is still an Unconditioned Essence (which is arguably true of some forms of Buddhism but not others). I suspect scholars of Taoism would object to equating the Tao with the God of classical theism. As for 'the traditional lore of primitive peoples', I'm sure Huxley didn't know enough to say.

Still, he has a point: one can see striking similarities in the mystical ideas and practices of the main religious traditions. The common goal is to overcome the ego and awaken to reality. Ordinary ego-centric reality is considered to be a trance-like succession of automatic impulses and attachments. The path

to awakening involves daily training in contemplation, recollection, non-attachment, charity and love. When one has achieved 'total selflessness', one realises the true nature of reality. There are different paths up the mystic mountain, but Huxley suggests the peak experience is the same in all traditions: a wordless, imageless encounter with the Pure Light of the divine.

How do we know it's worth following this arduous path? We have to take the great mystics' word for it. Huxley writes: 'the nature of this one Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfil certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart, and poor in spirit.' However, we can try the first steps up the mountain and see what sort of empirical results we get.

Whatever else it is, *The Perennial Philosophy* is an extraordinary work of synthesis. Huxley was incredibly well-read, considering he was half-blind and either had to read with a magnifying glass or be read to by his long-suffering wife Maria. His brother Julian recalled: 'How Aldous managed to absorb (and still more to digest) the colossal amount of facts and ideas which furnished his mind remains a mystery...He was apparently able to take [books and articles] in at a glance, and what is more, to remember their essential content.'

Huxley's book injected a global spirituality into mainstream western culture. He condemned the 'theological imperialism' that only appreciates western texts, and introduced many readers to now-familiar non-western teachings – the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, the teachings of the Buddha, Chuang Tzu, Rumi. Still, it's quite an idiosyncratic selection of quotes. There's a lot of Vedanta and Mahayana Buddhism, and plenty of male Christian mystics, but hardly any female mystics, only one line from Jesus, and no quotes from the Quran. In what sense, then, is it universal?

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Although Huxley wrote that the Perennial Philosophy is 'immemorial and universal', the book was a product of a particular time and place in his life. Huxley was known in the first half of his life as an irreverent mocker of religion, 'the man who hates God' as one newspaper headline put it. He was the grandson of Thomas Huxley, the famous Victorian scientist, who ridiculed Christian superstitions and suggested evolutionary science could be something like a new religion.

Aldous' cynical exterior broke down in the 1930s. He could no longer handle living in a materialist, meaningless universe. But rather than convert to Christianity, as peers like TS Eliot did, he turned to the scientific spirituality of his friend Gerald Heard. Heard was the BBC's first science journalist. He thought that psychology and other sciences could provide an empirical evidence base for spiritual techniques like meditation. This empirical spirituality appealed to the grandson of Thomas Huxley.

Huxley and Heard became leading figures in the pacifist movement of the 1930s. But they abruptly abandoned hope in Europe, and moved to Los Angeles in 1937. For a while they, along with the novelist Christopher Isherwood, became prominent members of the Vedanta Society of southern California (Vedanta is a form of Hindu mysticism). They were nicknamed 'the mystical expatriates' by another mystical expat, Alan Watts.

When war broke out, the mystical

expats faced a lot of criticism back in Britain for their 'desertion' to Hollywood. 'Gone with the Wind Up', read one headline. The strain led to another breakdown for Huxley.

I suspect the mystical expats felt deeply guilty at abandoning their friends and families in Europe. This is apparent in some passages of *The Perennial Philosophy*, which was written during the war:

Agitation over happenings which we are powerless to modify, either because they have not yet occurred, or else are occurring at an inaccessible distance from us, achieves nothing beyond the inoculation of here and now with the remote or anticipated evil that is the object of our distress. Listening four or five times a day to newscasters and commentators, reading the morning papers and all the weeklies and monthlies – nowadays, this is described as 'taking an intelligent interest in politics'; St John of the Cross would have called it indulgence in idle curiosity and the cultivation of disquietude for disquietude's sake.

The Perennial Philosophy was Huxley's desperate response to the war. This explains the book's deep political pessimism – he had tried to stop the war and failed. Modern civilization, he writes, is 'organized lovelessness', advertising is 'the organized effort to extend and intensify craving', the 20th century is 'The Age of Noise'. Most people are in thrall to various forms of idolatry and ersatz-religion – worship of progress, worship of technology, and above all worship of the nation-state. These, for Huxley, are all forms of 'religions of time' – which put their faith in future triumphs. Abrahamic religions are also, largely, religions of time (he argues) which is why they have led to so much bloodshed.

'The reign of violence will never come to an end', Huxley writes, until 'most human beings' accept the Perennial Philosophy and recognize it as 'the highest factor common to all the world religions'. The only way we can wake up from the nightmare of history is by focusing on the 'Eternal Now'. This requires a complete overhaul of society to install a new infrastructure of contemplation: 'a society is good to the extent that

it renders contemplation possible for its members'. This looked an unlikely prospect, so Huxley withdrew to the Mojave desert to try and become a saint.

Mysticism for the masses

Alas, total selflessness turned out to be hard to achieve. *The Perennial Philosophy* is a splendid encyclopedia of mysticism, but that's not the same as first-hand mystical experience. Huxley's son Matthew wondered, after his father's death: 'Did Aldous ever achieve [transcendence] or not; that's the question I'm raising. Or is it all intellectualized, put down in technical terms and other people's words as in *The Perennial Philosophy*?'

It was only in May 1953 that Aldous felt he finally had a mystical experience. And that was when he took mescaline, a psychedelic drug found in the peyote cactus. He discovered a ski lift up the mystical mountain. Psychedelics, he believed, gave ordinary people a glimpse of experiences once confined to saints, and helped intellectuals like him go beyond conceptual thinking. He also got out of his head through somatic practices like Tantra, Gestalt therapy, the Alexander technique. He even celebrated ecstatic dance. He seemed to relax and become more at peace with himself in the 1950s – friends like Isaiah Berlin came away struck by a sense of his goodness. With this relaxation came an optimism that civilization might not be headed for collapse. Perhaps the Perennial Philosophy might become popular after all.

That's precisely what happened in the years after his death. Throughout the 1960s, the perennial philosophy was championed by figures like Huston Smith and Ram Dass, both of them friends and fans of Huxley's. It was promoted in places like Esalen (the Californian college / ashram, inspired by Huxley) and celebrated in pop culture by everyone from John Coltrane to the Beatles. Before he died in 1963, Huxley became a hit on US campuses, lecturing on mystical experience to thousands of fascinated students. He appears on the cover of Sgt Pepper, and even inspired a band name – *The Doors*.

Today, the fastest-growing religious group in the United States is the 'spiritual but not religious', who account for 27% of the population (up 8% in five years, according to Pew Research). Like Huxley, this group practices spiritual techniques from many different religions – yoga, mindfulness, plant-medicine – and seeks to test out these methods with empirical science. A majority of American Christians, again according to Pew, now believe other faiths can lead to heaven. There's been an extraordinary contemplative revival – one in three Americans have tried yoga, and a quarter of Brits have tried meditation. There's also been a renaissance in psychedelic research in the last decade, inspired by Huxley's once-scandalous assertion that psychedelic drugs can lead to mystical experiences.

The 'mysticism for the masses' which Huxley prophesized seems to be coming to pass. According to surveys by Gallup and Pew, the number of Americans who say they've had one or more mystical experience rose from 22% in 1962 to 49% by 2009. It's likely they will become more common if and when psychedelics are legalized.

The problems with perennialism

And yet, for all its popular influence, some scholars of religion have dismissed Huxley's perennialism. The first counterblast was made by the philosopher Steven Katz in his 1978 paper 'Language, epistemology and mysticism'. Katz pointed out that mystical traditions are actually very different. They are rooted in differences of language, symbolism and culture, and if you try and remove 'mystical experiences' from that local soil and create a global synthesis, you end up with something stripped of a lot of its meaning. Christian mystics have Christian mystical experiences, Buddhists have Buddhist mystical experiences, and so on.

It is true that Huxley equates ideas that are, on closer inspection, often quite different. And his global, transcultural spirituality is very individualistic and deracinated – there's no sense of the mystical life being rooted in communities, with particular practices, rituals and guides. At the same time, Katz suggests we can never escape our cultural conditioning, and should

all just stay in our lane. The great mystics were themselves syncretistic pick n' mixers – Augustine loved Plotinus, St Teresa of Ávila loved the Stoics, Rowan Williams loves Buddhism. Why shouldn't we be syncretistic too? Katz ignores the extent to which mystical traditions may be shaped by our common neuro-psychology (mystics were the great psychologists of their day, Huxley suggested). Many mystical practices are based on the cognitive theory of the emotions – the idea that our ordinary self is constituted by habitual automatic beliefs, which we can notice, explore, and change. It's not surprising they discovered similar techniques for self-transformation.

The second major critique of perennialism came in 2002, with transpersonal psychologist Jorge Ferrer's book, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*. Ferrer points out that perennialism is hierarchical and thereby potentially intolerant. All religions are true, but some are truer than others.

This ranking of religions is apparent in Huxley's writings. He insists that ultimate mystical experiences are moments of non-dual pure consciousness – beyond any concepts of 'I' and 'You', beyond emotion, beyond language, image and culture. That's important for his political goal of uniting humanity under the Perennial Philosophy – all nations and colours will bleed into one in the Pure Light of the divine.

But in fact, many famous mystical experiences are highly emotional I-Thou encounters with the divine in a particular form: Jehovah, Krishna, the angel Gabriel and so on. This is troubling for Huxley, because it opens the way for disagreement and conflict, so he insists that 'there are good mystics and bad mystics'. Good mystics like Meister Eckhart experience ego-dissolutions into the Pure Light, while bad mystics have passionate I-Thou encounters. By this definition, Moses, Jesus, Mohammad, St Theresa, St Francis, Rumi, and anyone in the tradition of devotional mysticism are Bad Mystics. This is a bit rich from someone who never had a mystical experience except on drugs.

Perennialism also over-emphasises individual experience, according to Ferrer, which can lead to spiritual

narcissism and thrill-seeking (this is all too obvious in the psychedelic community). It can be self-validating – the proof of the philosophy is the special experiences of the saints. This ignores what Ian Hacking calls 'looping effects' – mental and somatic experience often takes the form we expect it to take. Huxley, for example, decided on one LSD trip that love is 'the primary and fundamental cosmic fact'. But that's what he expected, or hoped, to discover. As his friend Bertrand Russell retorted, why declare one state of mind ultimate and not another.

Finally, Ferrer argues that perennialism is objectivist and essentialist – it insists there is a reality of spiritual Facts waiting out there to be discovered. This is a form of 'subtle Cartesianism', Ferrer says, which ignores how humans construct reality through our bodies, our rituals, our words, actions and cultures.

The alternative Ferrer puts forward is 'participatory spirituality'. Humans co-create reality in a participatory interaction with the Mystery. This takes place not through 'experiences', which happen in an individual's head, but through events and encounters, which may involve many people (think of the Pentecost), and which may go to many possible destinations: 'the various traditions lead to the enactment of different spiritual ultimates'. Instead of 'many routes, one peak', he suggests 'one ocean, many shores'. It's reminiscent of the Marvel multiverse: 'You're going to the Pure Lands? Great, I'm off to Valhalla!'

Beyond naïve perennialism

Ferrer's participatory turn is fascinating, and very influential in intelligent New Age culture today. But it has limitations. Perhaps this is a product of San Francisco, where Ferrer's California Institute of Integral Studies is based, but his philosophy tries so hard to be tolerant and non-hierarchical, it ends up in a 'open, permissive horizon of transpersonal encounters'. This sounds less like God's banquet, more like a swingers party. As in the Dodo's race in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 'everybody has won and all must have prizes'. If you can't handle

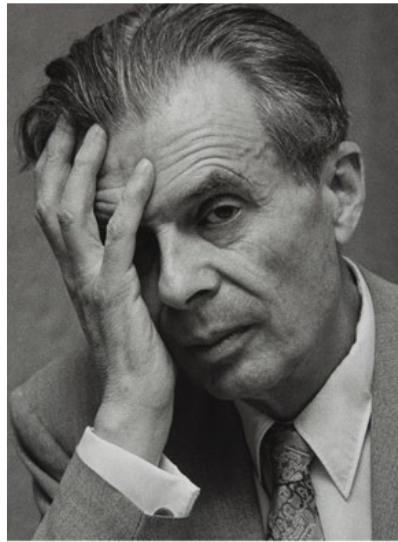
any hierarchy then you end up in a liberal relativism which can be just as intolerant as more traditional theories.

Ferrer is aware this is the weak point of his argument, and repeatedly insists we can still evaluate between different choices - between, say, joining a Quaker group or Charles Manson's Family - by assessing a tradition's 'emancipatory power'. How well does it combat egocentrism, how well does it 'counteract dissociation from the body and other aspects of the whole person', and how effectively does it 'foster ecological balance, social and economic justice, religious and political freedom, class and gender equality, and other fundamental human rights'?

In short, how well do spiritual traditions fit with the values of San Francisco liberalism. Why pick these values rather than others? If there is no ultimate reality, no truth, why are these the criteria for our spiritual choices? He is betraying a western, liberal bias. Some sort of ranking or hierarchy is probably inevitable if one is to avoid complete relativism.

Secondly, I am uneasy with his suggestion there are many 'spiritual ultimates', rather than the one ultimate reality suggested by most spiritual traditions. What about the afterlife - do we all experience the afterlife we expect? Do humanists get born once then die, Christians get born once then go to eternal heaven or hell, Buddhists get born repeatedly? Ferrer says reality is co-created by humans and 'the Mystery' but his multiple realities seem very human-made, diminishing the divine in its Power, Glory and independence from us.

It is useful here to bring in an argument made by David Bentley Hart in his 2013 book, *The Experience of God*. It's a surprisingly perennialist book for an Orthodox theologian (it credits Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* as an inspiration). Bentley Hart argues that critics of theism confuse gods with God. The spiritual multiverse may be full of many different powers and gods which we can connect to and manifest in different ways. But they are not ultimate, they are temporary beings or powers, like the rest of us. God,



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by contrast, is Being Itself, The Unconditioned Eternal Essence from which existence derives and on which all universes depend.

Being could take many forms, depending on our state of mind and cultural expectations, it could play with those expectations. But it is still One, the Unconditioned, which we can encounter not just through mystical experiences, but also through logical deduction from the strange facts of Being and consciousness.

Still, it is only possible to find agreement between all religions on such lofty abstract principles which, as professor Keith Ward says in *Religion and the Modern World*, are 'too vague to be the basis of real religious commitment'. Even perennialists don't agree on one version of the perennial philosophy. Huxley himself shifted during his life, from a more austere Vedanta-influenced perennialism to a more relaxed, body-accepting Mahayana / Tantric perennialism.

Sympathetic inclusivism

Professor Ward suggests a way forward, in a world of competing religious faiths, which treads a line between intolerant exclusivism and anything-goes relativism. One could call it 'sympathetic inclusivism' (that's my term, not Ward's).

This view suggests that it's good to have a spiritual community to practice with, and one spiritual path to commit to, otherwise you end up splashing around in the shallows, never really getting anywhere. It's inevitable you think some paths are

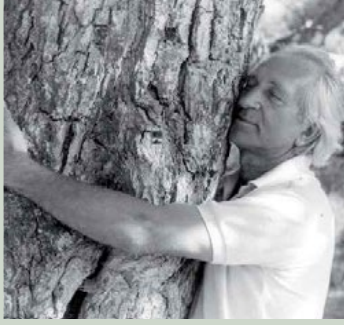
better than others, and that will lead to judgement of some people's choices - I am intolerant of human sacrifice, for example. It's probable you will think your path is better than others. Otherwise, why follow it?

However, any literate or curious person can't help but notice the interesting similarities between different traditions' spiritual techniques - I am struck by the similarities between Stoicism and Buddhism, for example. We can learn from other paths and travelers we meet along our way, and recognize the wisdom (perhaps divine wisdom) in other traditions. We can meet practitioners from other faiths in friendship, as the Dalai Lama meets with his friend Desmond Tutu.

Crucially, we can always remember that God / Ultimate Reality is greater than any of our religions, that human understanding is limited and prone to error and sin (particularly the sins of over-certainty, arrogance and intolerance), and we will probably *all* be surprised along the way. Inter-religious dialogue isn't just a nice extracurricular activity, in this view - it's an essential part of our journey beyond our biases, deeper into truth.

Not everyone will accept this sort of inclusivism. Some will insist on a stark choice between Jesus or Hell, the Quran or Hell. In some ways, over-certain exclusivism is a much better marketing strategy than sympathetic inclusivism. But if just some of the world's population opened their mind to the wisdom of other religions, without having to leave their own faith, I think the world would be a better, more peaceful place. And, like Aldous Huxley, I still believe in the possibility of growing spiritual convergence between different religions and philosophies, even if right now the tide seems to be going the other way.

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Henryk Skolimowski



Paul Kieniewicz

The Eco-Philosophy Mandala – A new world view

Henryk Skolimowski

Edited by Paul Kieniewicz

In June 1974 I was invited by the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London to participate in a symposium entitled: “Beyond Alternative Technology”. We were already convinced, at this time, that the Ecology Movement had somehow burned itself out. Building windmills and insisting on soft technology was not enough. So four of us took to the floor to ask ourselves, “Where do we go from here?”

Each of us had exactly ten minutes to deliver his message. Instead of analysing the shortcomings of the Ecology Movement, I decided to make a leap forward and ask myself, “What is most troubling in the foundation of our knowledge, and what other foundation should be assumed so that it can carry the edifice of new thinking and a new society?” The sketch which I delivered was entitled “Ecological Humanism”. In it, the major ideas that became the backbone of Eco-Philosophy were formulated. It happens rarely that one is aware of the exact point of a new departure. It was perhaps a coincidence that the Architectural Association immediately published my text. And it was by a fluke of a chance that I kept one copy.

1 Ecological Humanism: An answer to “Where do we go from here?”

Oswald Spengler has written that ‘Technics are the Tactics for living.’ This is a very useful phrase. I shall take advantage of it, while stating our dilemma and searching for possible solutions.

Modern technology, or better - Western technology, has failed us not

because it has become ecologically devastating, but mainly because it has forgotten its basic function, namely that all technics are, in the last resort, the tactics for living. Because modern technology has failed us as a set of the tactics for living, it has also proved in the process to be economically counter-productive and ecologically ruinous.

This indictment also affects Alternative Technology. Alternative Technology started rather vigorously, captured the imagination of many, and is now fizzling out. Why? Because Alternative Technology has not taken itself seriously enough, that is, as a new set of tactics for living.

When pushed to an extreme, Alternative Technology has either become an idolatry of new kinds of gadgets, or else a crass ideology of the New Left : a feverish process perpetuating itself. Alternate Technology has been waning because it did not go to its roots; it did not confront itself with the ultimate task of all technics: to become a set of the tactics for living.

Tactics for living are not merely new uses of old instruments. Culture is a fundamental part of the tactics for living. Thriving and healthy culture provides a set of dynamic structures

for living. Within the Western world, particularly during the last 150 years, and especially during the last 50 years, culture (as well as religion) has been systematically misunderstood, mystified, misread and distorted, and taken to be an anachronism of the pre-technological era. But culture is an inherent part of the human strategies for survival and well being. Now the culture of the post-industrial era cannot be a simple resuscitation of some traditional cultures, for it will have to meet new contingencies of life, which means: it will have to rethink the products of the human mind and spirit within a differently conceived world.

I have chosen to call this new set of the tactics for living, which encompasses New Technology, New Culture and New Ideology-Ecological Humanism. Ecological Humanism is not a new label for old things, nor simple pouring old wine into new bottles. I must point out, in particular, that Ecological Humanism has little to do with traditional humanism; and it quite sharply separates itself from Marxist or Socialist humanism, which calls (along with other humanism) for the appropriation of Nature to man.

Traditional humanism has emphasized the nobility of the human being, the independence of humans, indeed the greatness of humans who are cut in the Protean mold. This conception of humanity went hand in hand with the idea of appropriating Nature to the ends and needs of humans. Marx fully accepted this conception of humanity and the idea of the appropriation of Nature (or simply using Nature) to human advantage.

Ecological Humanism is based on the reversed premise. It calls for the appropriation of humans to Nature. We have to see the human as a part of a larger scheme of things: of Nature and Cosmos. We have to transcend and abolish the idea of the Protean (and Faustian) human. The consequences of this reversal are quite far-reaching, and I will just touch on some of them. On the practical level, Ecological Humanism signifies, among other things, frugality, recycling, the reverence for Nature, which are really three different aspects of the same thing.

I must emphasize that Ecological Humanism is not just another fancy name for saying that we should be less wasteful, but it signifies a fundamental reorientation of the multitude of things. Not many people, Marxists in particular, are aware that traditional humanism,

as based on the ideal of the Protean human and the idea of the appropriation of Nature (with the tacit acceptance of both present sciences and present technology), are simply incompatible with the idea of harmony between the human species and the rest of Nature.

Now, let me spell out some of the consequences of Ecological Humanism. On the practical level, as I have already mentioned, Ecological Humanism spells out a new kind of technology based on the idea of frugality, recycling, reverence for Nature. It signifies a new economy, of which reverence for Nature is not a spurious ornament, but an intrinsic part of a new design.

On the level of the individual, Ecological Humanism signifies inner exuberance instead of the restless outward activity; empathy and compassion rather than ruthless competition; understanding in depth rather than merely handling of information.

On the level of the entire culture, Ecological Humanism signifies a fundamental switch from the traditional idiom, in which humans assert themselves against things 'out there', and try to impose themselves on the world, to the idiom, in which humans mesh themselves with the things 'out there'.

It is by now clear to you, I hope, that no New Technology can provide a solution by itself; that no New Culture can provide a solution by itself; that no New Ideology can provide an answer by itself, but that each must become an aspect of a larger paradigm, an aspect, in other words, of a new set of the tactics for living.

In the realm of ideology, Ecological Humanism points towards social relationships based on the idea of sharing, and stewardship, rather than owning things and fighting continuous ruthless battles in open and camouflaged social wars.

In short, Ecological Humanism is based on a new articulation of the world at large:

- it sees the world not as a place for pillage and plunder, an arena for gladiators, but as a sanctuary in which we temporarily dwell, and of which we must take the utmost care;
- it sees humans not as acquirers and conquistadors, but as guardians and stewards;
- it sees knowledge not as an instrument for the domination of Nature, but ultimately as

techniques for the refinement of the soul;

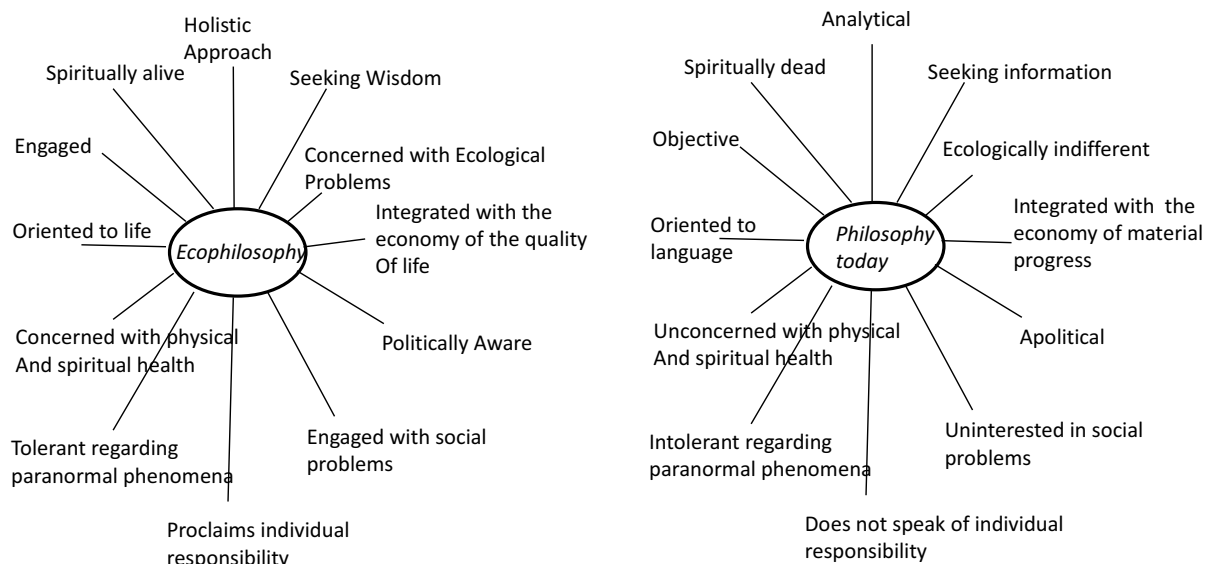
- it sees values not in pecuniary equivalents, but in intrinsic terms as a vehicle which contributes to a deeper understanding of people by people, and a deeper cohesion between people and the rest of creation;
- and it sees all these above mentioned elements as a part of the new tactics for living. "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?" (Browning).

2 A new concept of the human

It was clear to me from the start that a philosophical reconstruction which attempts to provide a new philosophical foundation for our civilisation, and which aims at the creation of a new philosophy, must simultaneously address itself to the structure of reality (thus must create a new metaphysics, or a new Cosmology), to the phenomenon of man and to the problem of values. Against the mechanistic world view, or cosmology, we must create a new conception of reality, a new cosmology. An appropriate name for this cosmology is, of course, Eco-Cosmology. Eco-Cosmology attempts to redefine the structure of the Cosmos in new terms. From this overall structure must clearly follow that a symbiotic, cooperative, and equitable structure of the human world is not an aberration, but a natural consequence.

Thomas Berry has actually addressed this cosmological question very well and extensively in his various writings. Quite rightly, he insists that ours is not only an environmental crisis, is not only a religious crisis, but above all, a cosmological crisis. The old cosmologies, conceived under the auspices of traditional religions and traditional philosophies, are clearly insufficient and act as straitjackets.

The importance of the cosmological dimension is by and large not sufficiently appreciated by various schools of Eco-Philosophy, and certainly not sufficiently addressed in their writings. Deep Ecology, Social Ecology and Eco-Feminism are certainly lacking in this respect. I should mention, however that there is a dim outline of a new cosmology in some new writings on Eco-Feminism, as they attempt to reconstruct our world view by restructuring our reality in the image and characteristics of the goddess, with her female, inclusive, compassionate and cooperative qualities. But this dim outline is not yet a cosmology. There is a sort of



implied cosmology in the writings of Deep Ecology philosophers. But this is only implied, not spelled out.

As to Murray Bookchin's cosmology, as expressed in his Social Ecology, the situation is perhaps even less satisfactory. He is a staunch believer in secularism. And he is also a staunch believer in science and technology, which are (for him) the main forces of change and social amelioration. In accepting secularism, science and technology (with all their blessings), indirectly Bookchin accepts the mixed bag of our rational, scientific, technological civilisation. What is lurking behind Bookchin's writings is the old-fashioned mechanistic cosmology which, by its consequences, has wrought so much damage to the natural and the human world.

Another dimension of a viable Eco-Philosophy must be a new concept of the human. Again, Thomas Berry addresses this question excellently, when he insists that we must re-invent the human on the species level. In my own writing, I propose the idea of Ecological Person in contrast to the Faustian Man, the Technological Man, the Homo Faber, and also in contrast to the Rational Man. Ecological person is the creature of evolution. It emerges at a certain juncture of human evolution and will disappear at another juncture, when evolution (through us) will transcend itself further. Ecological Person recognises the redeeming and necessary nature of suffering, of compassion, of love, of wisdom.

Ecological Person envisages the human condition as defined by at least the four above-mentioned components. Perhaps what needs to be emphasised in our times is the

importance of wisdom, and especially ecological wisdom or ecosophy. Wisdom is not the possession of a set of permanent principles, and therefore not to be found in *the Upanishads, the Bible, the Bhagavad-Gita the Koran or in Dante's Divine Comedy*. Wisdom is the possession of right knowledge for a given state of the world, for given conditions of society, for given articulation of the human condition. Insofar as the state of the world changes, insofar as the conditions of society change, insofar as the articulation of knowledge goes on, insofar, therefore as the articulation of the human being proceeds, insofar as the human mind and human sensitivities become refined, we cannot embrace one structure of wisdom for all times, but we must seek a different structure, a different form of balance appropriate for a given time.

Wisdom is therefore a historical category: not a set of permanent forms, but a set of dynamic structures; always to be rebuilt, restructured, re-adjusted, re-articulated. Evolutionary wisdom is the understanding how the human condition changes through centuries, millennia, eons of time. Only such a conception of wisdom can aid the human race in its evolutionary voyage. The concept of the Ecological Person is not sufficiently addressed in the literature of either Deep Ecology or Social Ecology. Nor is the importance of ecological wisdom sufficiently recognised and incorporated into thinking of the majority of Eco-philosophers.

3 The eco-philosophy mandala

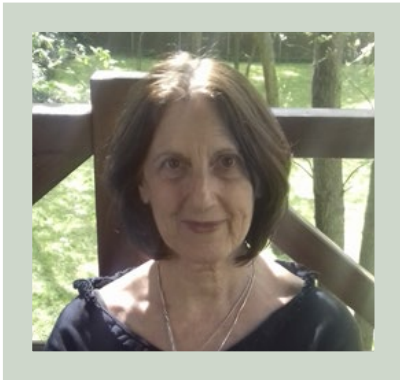
What sort of philosophy should we construct that could deal with the large number of burning issues, individual alienation, social

degeneration, ecological crisis and the search for meaning? What system do we need to link life and thought? The results of my deliberations was the book, *Eco-Philosophy, Designing New Tactics for living*, published in 1981. The kernel of the philosophy is in the two mandalas, showing the contrast between eco-philosophy and the dominant analytical philosophy. (See figure above).

Eco-philosophy is par excellence, a philosophy of life, and that requires translating abstract philosophical categories into forms for life. The most essential ideas are presented in the form of the above mandalas. Mandala thinking enables us to see how ideas are connected in an organic form, one following from the other; how they participate in the meaning of each other. It also enables us to grasp immediately in one picture, a very complex set of ideas and their relationships. Mandala thinking is dancing thinking.

Henryk Skolimowski (SMN) was a philosopher and ecologist who inspired generations of ecologists and conservationists. He was professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California, and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where he taught his system of eco-philosophy. The author of over two dozen books in English and in Polish, he conveyed the vision of the world as a sanctuary. He taught that a society must be grounded in its ecological context in order to grow and to flourish. He would refer to himself as "a dissident son of western civilisation".

Paul Kieniewicz (SMN) is a geologist, astronomer and writer. He is the author of Gaia's Children, co-author with Andrew Glazewski of Harmony of the Universe. He lives in Poland where along with his wife Amber, he heads the Sichow Educational Foundation.



The 5 Living Generations' Call to Protect the Earth and all Beings

Joan Skolimowski

The winds of change are arising as we live in a time of great climate change. The voices of alarm come from scientists, children, ecologists, philosophers, parents, endangered communities across the globe.

Ecologists and Eco-Philosophers have been working to guide humanity for some 40 years. Gradually, small groups have gathered to sound the warning that life as we know it is in peril. With increasing droughts, floods, hurricanes, tornados, and fire storms, humanity is now awakened to the problem.

It may be too late to return even with great effort to the climate as we have known with fluctuations within an adaptable range. However, there is time, a short period of time, for humanity to rally to bring about a moderate reversal by eliminating the use of fossil fuels and carbon into the atmosphere.

An undertaking of this magnitude would seem to be unimaginable to many accustomed to the present mode of living with carbon use/emissions and mindless ways of life based on continual yet unsustainable progress. All the

world is following the example of affluent communities throughout the globe on this path to oblivion. If no global effort is made to bring about a reversal of humanity's harmful way of living, then so be it - gradual extinction of living beings. Even those wealthy bunkering away to survive can only delay the result. *The biological system and humanity are dependent on each other.*

What is the alternative? It is the coming together of 5 generations: the baby boomers, Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z, and Gen Alpha. In other words, people in their teens to those in their eighties coming together to figure out rapid, sustainable living and CHANGE within a 12-year time frame! Are we up to this? Can we work together and preserve life?

If various countries can land on the moon and eventually land on Mars, then the people of the Earth can do this. It is what life has done for billions of years: ADAPT.

It is a question of adapting in a short amount of time for the greater good: preserving all life. We are all linked in the web of life: humans, animals, plants.

Lastly, here we are on one planet and yet we humans are divided in age-old concepts of cultural and ethnic differences, cultures which have fought and competed for millennia. Time is up. It is now these 5 generations spanning 14-84 that need to unite as one people. This is the challenge like no other; one that will need us to put aside our differences for the sake of Mother Earth.

This will be difficult for unaware or small-minded leaders of countries to work together to spawn this worldwide effort. In the end, it is the choice of the people of the world to make this monumental change for the betterment of all living beings. Inaction and division will bring about doom to all sooner or later. Unity and action will give the chance to ensure continued life on our planet. The choice is ours and it must be NOW.

Juanita (Joan) Skolimowski, multi-lifel work experience: translator, director of center for young children, social worker, poet, sculptor of figurines, writer, mystic, Eco Philosophy practitioner, Buddhist practitioner



Visioneers International Network

*Geraldine Schwartz PhD and Desmond Berghofer PhD,
Vancouver, Canada*

The Visioneers International Network Web of Good Work is a meta project that provides the opportunity to participate on a global, next-generation online platform celebrating, showcasing, connecting and collaborating with people and projects that illustrate human nobility as models and examples of an evolving human consciousness.

An Invitation to Participate

In the teen years of the 21st century, science has demonstrated, albeit at the margins, that humanity can learn to cooperate around a sense of unity, and that we are all connected energetically. Operating under the illusion of our separateness, we have built our civilisations and fought innumerable wars, and we have now come to a dangerous time where our industries and institutions are destroying the very life systems of the planet.

At the same time, a new kind of global commons is emerging with thousands of projects and the people who create them across all areas of human activity that express human nobility, courage and boldness. These projects and people represent the antithesis and antidote to the smog of negativity, conflict, violence and greed polluting the discourse and consciousness about our prospects for the future.

The Visioneers International Network has created a Web of Good Work and Virtual Exposition to celebrate and showcase these outstanding projects and people, and to connect the incredible community of changemakers to empower them to collaborate, mentor, create and inspire each other as they create the potential for a quality future never before seen on Earth.

It was imagined in 1992 in a novel *The Visioneers: A Courage Story about Belief in the Future*, written by Desmond Berghofer. In this story, Visioneers act to overcome evil and corruption and go on to connect people across the global commons in a six-day event called the Congress of the Global Mind. It is a monumental accomplishment inspiring people everywhere to embrace a mantra of *Why Not?* as a cry to overcome problems and provide solutions that had hitherto seemed impossible.

Now in 2019, as the teen years of the 21st century come to an end, the founders of the Visioneers International Network have used the connective power of the digital technology not available in 1992 to actualise what was then a fantasy, by creating a global community of people who understand that we inhabit the Earth as one evolving human family.

The central mission of the Visioneers International Network is to connect us as friends, partners, colleagues and mentors, both in person and online, as we showcase and celebrate our good-work projects, connect, collaborate and create together. We are growing the network by sharing

and inviting others of like-mind to to build a global Web of Good Work and create a new community of 21st century changemakers.

Their work is showcased on a Virtual Exposition of Good Work www.thevisioneers.ca/virtual-expo. A 90 second video www.thevisioneers.ca provides a succinct summary of the mission and purpose of the Network: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUzhUKhFV54>

The invitation. . .

We invite our fellow members of the Scientific and Medical Network to explore the website www.thevisioneers.ca and to participate in building this global community of positive changemakers.

Courage and boldness are requisites of current generations to protect the future.

The Visioneers International Network provides the structure for dynamic action to make the difference. The key task for those who participate is to add their own contributions and become fellow builders of the Network by inviting others of like-mind in their own communities to become part of the Network, while also nominating worthy projects and people so that the Web of Good Work Virtual Exposition grows into a positive force for our evolving humanity that can be shared planet-wide.

For further information about the scope and possibilities of the Visioneers International Network contact Desmond or Gerri at desmond@thevisioneers.ca or gerrischwartz@thevisioneers.ca.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE



Not an Obituary – a voyage around Ram Dass (1931-2019)

Stephen G. Wright

The web is awash with obituaries of Ram Dass, full of the facts of his life in which he became a mighty spiritual teacher known to millions and influencing millions more. There's a good film of him and his old buddy Timothy Leary "Dying to Know" on YouTube for those who want more backstory. He "went Home" on December 22nd aged 88.

Now I'm done with the facts. This is personal.

He eschewed labels or roles. Revered as a guru by some, he was clear that he was not. As teacher he was a true e-duc-ator...through wisdom and loving presence, he awakened in us that which was already there. I remember him telling a story about teaching, how everyone would nod when he hit the spot – why? Because like all good teachers he showed us what we already know!

We shared the same sense of humour and he had the rascally ability to lurch from the most profound discourse into raucous belly laughs. That's what I loved about Ram Dass, his integration of things, the absence of separation between the plunge into the depths of truth and cracking hilarity. One time we'd just gone through a deep

healing conversation when he took a packet of incense I had brought, tucked it under his nose and did a Charlie Chaplin impression. When I asked about the food in his accommodation at Tiburon after his stroke – "marvellous" in front of the cook; screwed up face when she was out of sight! Once as I left, after we talked about spiritual power and my inclination to put him on a pedestal, he knelt before me in mock worship. Everything a teaching, everything a laugh.

My great Soul Friend Jeannie (Sayre-Adams) knew Ram Dass and had worked with him in the 70's in San Francisco. I was in spiritual crisis and she called him. - "Bring him along this afternoon". Thus I found myself before his patient listening as I babbled my story, sitting in the living room of his very ordinary San Anselmo home.

Then he stopped me and told me three things I had to do. (I learned something about spiritual direction then, that sometimes it really is directive) At the time I was livid with him (did he know?). He was supposed to be some new age 'do your own thing' kind of guy...how dare he tell me what to do?



Then we took a break, Jeannie sat in the porch and I returned and sat alone with him in another room. This time he did all the talking. So much of the detail has now left me, until at one point, and this I will remember until I die and perhaps beyond, he explored how I was in danger of distorting the truths being revealed to me. At that point his eyes rolled to the back of his head, he leaned into the couch, raised one palm above, the other towards me and said "After all, it's a case of 'not



my will but Thine’.” At that point he let out a long drawn out breath and closed his eyes.. For a second I thought he was ill, then I felt impelled to sit on the floor in front of him.

What happened next is nigh on impossible to detail, but I felt like the heat in the room was turned up. My eyes were closed but there was a blast of light. I sat there reeling for what seemed like an age. Then I opened my eyes to find him looking at me, we stood up, I was groggy afoot, he held onto me, told me he loved me and that “You are a lovely man”, and it was time to go. The next thing I know we are in the drive talking about his MG Roadster (blue as I recall) and our mutual love of MG’s. Then with an embrace and appreciation Jeannie and I drove off.

I was barely coherent and a few miles on we had to stop while I got out the car and just sat at the roadside watching a deer approach me. “Thy will be done” is on my mother’s grave, it has been a prayer mantra with me ever since and the deer was one of my shamanic guides. Just seeing the latter earthed me.

I visited him half a dozen times after that, plus occasional phone calls. I asked once about that first meeting (from a phone booth in the bowels of Grace Cathedral San Francisco) “It was shaktipat, wasn’t it?” He said, “Some call it that. It wasn’t me, you know.” The matter was closed. That’s one of the things he was clear about, it was not he, it was what was working through him – his guru Maharaj-ji; love.

There are many tales to tell, too many. Each encounter was both terrifying and life changing. Terrifying because I knew he’d prick my ego bubbles; each time nudging me onwards into transformation and my path of service.

Twenty years later and ten years after his stroke on a (residential)

retreat with him for a week on Maui (with Jeannie) our relationship had shifted. It was like two old friends talking. We went to the beach with him. Took the ritual swim out to the buoy (‘Oh buoy, oh buoy, oh buoy!’ - we chanted) then afterwards a long lunch with friends where he wept when someone read a passage from Steve Jobs’ biography about how important Ram Dass had been to him. And as I sat next to him I detected also a degree of what? Loneliness? That all around him were people who honoured and admired him, but maybe not always people who were just being with him as friends, as just another guy.

In the midst of his paralysis I found him more available than ever. Once we sat there for half an hour or more, not sure, time had no meaning, and simply looked into each other’s eyes. I felt like I was sunbathing. I asked, “What just happened?”. He said, “This is what happens when soul talks to soul”.

With Ram Dass it was always soul talk, I need hide nothing or fear judgement from him. Deep love. Deep trust. A role model for my own life.

I once took a painful time with my son to him. He gave me all the textbook spiritual answers, but I felt something was missing, that he didn’t understand the love between father and son. I thought, but did not say, “You don’t know what it’s like; you don’t have a child”. Years later as we drove to the beach he said, “I’ve got some news for you. I have a son. Then told the story of a brief affair in the 60’s and of a woman who did not tell him the child might be his. Over 50 years later that man, now a father, discovered the possibility and sought out Ram Dass. (DNA tests affirmed it). As we drove along Ram Dass told of how his son was troubled and I asked if that bothered him. “No”, he said, then a long pause.... “Not!”). Later I said. “You know

there was a time when I was really angry with you? “Angry with me? You were angry with ME?” He replied, with mock outrage. I told of my feelings about his response to the dilemma with my son. We smiled and both knew. That too taught me humility, we can still be learning into very old age.

Then there was the time in San Francisco a year after his stroke and I phoned him from a café in Noe Valley, disappointed that I could not meet him in person. There was some awful row going on in the back ground, I think with Peter his then partner, I heard him say that Peter had to stop it, because his behaviour meant that people could not visit him. He apologised and we ended the call. I suddenly felt fearful and called him back “Are you safe Ram Dass. Are you able to say over the phone if so?” He was, it was all OK, and we saw him the next day with a group in San Rafael. I learned something then (was there ever a moment when I did not lean something with Ram Dass) about the ordinariness of him, that he experienced problems just like anyone else, about my inclination to project my stuff onto him about what it was to be spiritual/above the swampy lowlands of ordinary humanity.

His great gift to me was his extraordinary ordinariness. His great heart. His fiery intelligence. His unconditional love. His relentless willingness to pursue his authentic self, and to help others do likewise. His profound humility and willingness to surrender into realisation and to see that potential in all other people. He has been the most important (male) teacher in my life and still is. He played a huge part in helping me to know who I really am. I know he is gone physically, but in my heart he is still with me. Soul is still talking to soul across the unbreakable Wi-Fi of love.

I think it was John Cassian writing in the 6th century that said it was important to forget about miracles or great deeds or works, rather the measure of a person was “How does he love” Oh how Ram Dass fulfilled this. Oh Buoy! Oh Buoy! Oh Buoy! - did he, does he, love well. Just Being Here Now.

Stephen G. Wright is a Visiting Professor and Honorary Fellow of the University of Cumbria, a spiritual director at the Sacred Space Foundation (www.sacredspace.org.uk), author and poet.



Beyond the Brain 2019

Further Reaches of Consciousness Research
University of Westminster

1st-3rd November 2019 with pre-conference
workshop 1st November 2019

John Clarke

What can the sciences teach us about our innermost conscious selves and our final destinies beyond death? These are topics that have typically been avoided by scientists devoted to a purely materialist and reductionist worldview. But times are changing, and this conference opened up a range of new approaches from within the sciences which are beginning to challenge traditional methodological boundaries, and daring to address fundamental issues of life – and death.

The conference itself, organized in collaboration with *The Alef Trust* and *The Academy for the Advancement of Postmaterialist Sciences*, set out to expand our typical conference format by adding an extra opening day of workshops on the Friday led by two of our conference speakers, and in the evening by a pre-conference showing of the film *Journeys to the Edge of Consciousness*, which featured the psychedelic experiences of Aldous Huxley, Timothy Leary and Alan Watts.

In her Friday morning workshop **Prof Marjorie Woollacott** led participants in an in-depth exploration of the nature of consciousness from both the scientific perspective and that

of direct experience, discussing how each contributes towards a complete understanding of the topic. And in her workshop in the afternoon **Prof Betty Kovacs** discussed the question why the early Roman Church waged a centuries-long campaign to destroy Classical culture and all previous spiritual traditions, a crime that has contributed towards the pervasive pathology of Western culture.

In his introduction to the conference on the Saturday morning **David Lorimer** pointed to the systemic limitations of the materialist approach. The SMN, he argued, was one of the leading advocates of an evidence-based postmaterialist science which emphasizes the integration of the human psyche within the cosmic whole without reducing it to a product of matter, and thereby opens up the possibility of an investigation of the transcendent level of reality from a scientific standpoint.

Dr Rupert Sheldrake's talk focused on the spiritual practices which he sees as arising out of traditional mysticism, but going beyond them in a way that takes account of the increasing secular outlook of our times. These include everyday practices which perpetuate the underlying and timeless need for

spiritual ritual and transcendent aspiration, and which contribute to the expansion of human consciousness beyond the everyday as well the improvement in mental health and general happiness. These involve such commonplace activities as the enjoyment of nature, of community singing, sports, pilgrimages, festivals and pets, extending towards the recital of prayers, degrees of asceticism, fasting and rites of passage.

Dr Marjorie Woollacott described her own personal evolution from a science-based materialism towards a more spiritual outlook following a powerful spiritual awakening which opened up a completely new perspective on life and which enabled her to feel 'at home' in the world for the first time. This led her to engage in a research programme of clinical study of the cerebral activity of subjects undergoing deep meditation practices, and later to the study of NDEs. She was also led to a study of the 'placebo effect' which took her via clinical studies to the conclusion that, not only are there clear evidence of the healing powers of the mind, but also strongly suggest that the effect can work inter-personally, for example between doctor and patient. In general terms she was led by these clinical studies to a belief in the

primacy of consciousness and its fundamental role in nature.

The first session on the Saturday afternoon introduced us to the controversial question of the use of psychedelic drugs for clinical purposes. It was led by **Amanda Fielding**, creator of the Beckley Foundation, a UK-based think-tank with UN-accreditation, dedicated to activating global drug policy reform, and initiating scientific research into psychoactive substances. This work included the use in clinical contexts of for example psilocybin and ayahuasca, and she argued that clinical data indicated a significant success rate overall. She also claimed to observe significant parallels with traditional descriptions of the mystical experience of oneness with the All when under treatment, in addition to an earthly boost in cognitive performance. Amanda's approach was supported in a dialogue with **Dr David Luke** who argued that in strict clinical conditions the use of psychedelic drugs has been shown to enhance creativity by the drug's capacity to increase the activity of lesser-used parts of the brain and to increase the intra-neuronal connectivity of the brain.

For the final session of the day **Ken Wilber** joined us from the USA by videolink and was interviewed by David Lorimer. 'Interview' may not be the right word since one question from David was enough to set Ken running without interruption for more than an hour. He used the time to explain his intellectual and spiritual development, how early on in life he was attracted by the sheer variety of spiritual and philosophical traditions, both as worldviews and as ritual practices, and how he rejected the possibility that only one of these ways could be the true and correct one.

What he sought instead was a way of integrating these traditions into an integrated spectrum of consciousness, a worldview which combined the infinite variety of mind and world yet which pointed to their ultimate unity, a unity which becomes ever more developed, but never complete, a dialectical process in which higher stages integrate yet transcend the lower. As a conceptual

scaffolding for his explorations he made use of a fourfold distinction within the world of experience comprising mind and body with individual and collective factors. Mystical experience, he argued, represented a transcendence of this quaternary world, the emergence of a type of consciousness which has access to a single underlying reality, the 'ground of all being', a unity beyond all opposites, a kind of 'non-local consciousness' as he put it.

The following morning began with an introduction by **Dr Peter Fenwick** who talked about various states of consciousness which accompany death, and cited evidence for the view that NDEs can plausibly be understood as typifying the state of consciousness that accompanies death itself – 'End of Life Experiences' (ESEs) – and could thus be considered as premonitions – near or far – of the experience of transition from life to death. He also pointed out that the drug Ketamine has helped in bringing together our understanding of these two phenomena, NDEs and ESEs.

This was followed by **Prof Chris Roe** on *Investigation of the Phenomenology and Impact of Spontaneous and Direct After-Death Communications*. (Evelyn Elsaesser was due to accompany Chris on the platform but was indisposed and unable to attend, though we exchanged greetings with her by videolink). In his talk he explained his professional involvement in the field of ADCs – After Death Communications – in which living persons believe they have encountered the dead, whether recent or not, through some sort of verbal communication. Scientific investigation of ADCs go back to the nineteenth century when they were discussed by the Society for Psychical Research which in 1894 collected reports of seventeen thousand such communications.

Several other such surveys have been carried out more recently. Most of these demonstrate that such communications are surprisingly common, they usually convey positive feelings of affection, and they have often been greatly appreciated by the receiver, even life-changing. In some cases new

information was received about the dead person which was unknown to the receiver. With the benefit of the latest research methods Chris and his colleagues are carrying out a detailed survey in this field by means of an on-line questionnaire which he described for us in some detail but whose results will take some time yet to analyse and assess.

Prof Betty Kovacs' talk on *Death and the New Consciousness* took the very different form of a highly personal communication about her own experiences of death within her family. Her thinking about these experiences – which are too complex and personal to be recounted here – arose from her early interest in the mystery religions of the ancient Greek world, such as those associated with Eleusis, and from a reading of C.G. Jung's *Red Book*, both of which contrast the world of common perception and habit with a more secret symbolic, spiritual world that lies behind the everyday façade of life. She spoke with optimism about the possibility of recovering something of these ancient mysteries, and Jung's highly personal recapitulation of them, in our own spiritually impoverished lives today, not through the victory of the one over the other however but through discovering their essential complementarity.

The talk by **Dr Steve Taylor** on *Spiritual Science: How a Panspiritist Perspective can help make Sense of the World* moved us in yet another direction by means of a careful elaboration of the difference between 'panpsychism' and 'panspiritism'. The former is the fairly common conception of conscious mind being present at some level of development in every material entity from atoms upwards. The latter, a new coinage of Steve's he assured us, conveys the sense that mind is in some way present in reality as a whole, that a spiritual quality is a primary aspect of reality like an elemental force such as gravity that pervades all of nature. The importance of this idea lies in its capacity to render something spiritually significant about the universe as a whole, and as living beings such as ourselves whose being and meaning are integral to

this spiritually ordered universe. This way of thinking, by contrast with a materialist worldview, allows us to begin to make sense of a whole range of experiences from mystical awakening to NDEs, from altruism to the emergence of rational mind.

The videolink talk by **Prof Stephen Braude** from the USA, *Mechanistic Errors in Consciousness Research*, while sharing a similar basic outlook to the previous talk, adopted a much sharper focus by examining a fundamental error in arguments which seek to reduce mental phenomena to more fundamental material states. A typical example in science of this kind of mechanistic reduction is, he argued, from the macro phenomena of heat to the micro phenomena of molecular motion, involving what he neatly called 'the small-is-beautiful assumption'. This involves first

of all the unwarranted claim that all valid explanations go downwards to the lowest possible level, and secondly in the case of mind/consciousness fails to appreciate that there are radically different conceptual structures at work between these levels which exclude simplistic mechanistic reduction; his key example was the incommensurability between remembering the face of a friend on the one hand and related brain traces on the other.

A surprise was in store at this point in his talk where Stephen mentioned a criticism he had made some years ago of Rupert Sheldrake's idea of morphic resonance. Whether by pre-planning or not, Rupert was in the audience and so sprang to his own defence. This gave rise to a lively debate between the two which, as I read it, ended at

least with the agreement that they shared a common position about the limitations of reductionist arguments, and no doubt contributed thereby to the force of transatlantic resonance at a time when it appears to be much needed.

Much needed physico-spiritual relief at this mentally demanding, somewhat left-brain, conference was provided by Fabio Garces' *Sonic Enchantment*, and by a *Movement and Sound Meditation* by the URUBU School of Transformational Arts.

Prof J.J. Clarke's most recent book, *The Self-Creating Universe: the Making of a Worldview*, seeks to bring science and spirituality together within the framework of an emergentist cosmology.

Beyond the Brain 2020 - see www.beyondthebrain.org



A caterpillar exists to eat. Its aim is to consume as much as possible. When there is nothing left to devour, evolution forces its isolation into becoming a chrysalis; within which it dissolves. In the breaking down of its old form, a new form begins to evolve into a butterfly. One morning, it breaks through the wall of its chrysalis. It waits for its wings to dry in the warmth of the Sun, and then it flies. A butterfly exists to pollinate. Its aim is to sip the sweetness of flowers. And as it does so, it fertilizes life.

We have been a caterpillar species; consuming, not only all that Gaia could spare in her generosity, but much more. Now cocooned by physical distancing, we can choose to breakdown who we thought we were. To surrender; not to the will of man, but to the evolutionary impulse of the Universe. To dissolve our separated sense of self and co-create imaginal cells of potential; linking up and lifting up to form organelles of emergence. We can reframe and more deeply understand, the breakdown and dying of the old and breakthrough and birth of the new; not as a crisis but as a metamorphosis. Instead of plunderers we can evolve to become pollinators.

Dr Jude Currivan

 **www.wholeworld-view.org**



20th Anniversary Meeting of the *Spirituality and Psychiatry* Special Interest Group (SSIG)

Larry Culliford

24th September 1999 marked the first meeting of the SSIG, founded originally by four psychiatrist SMN members* together with a past-president of the Royal College (Andrew Sims) and one other keen supporter (Chris Holman), all still living, with four present at this anniversary celebration day conference, which was also attended by a bursting full house, a total of 137 psychiatrists and guests. The SSIG currently numbers 3,865 members, about one-fifth of the full College membership.

The first speaker, Psychiatry Professor and Anglican priest, **Christopher Cook**, spoke of how the importance of spirituality and religion for mental health had become increasingly recognised, researched, disputed and debated;



Andrew Powell

accepting that significant conceptual and methodological questions in research, and challenging clinical dilemmas over professional boundaries, remain. Rather than acting as fixed barriers, he

suggested, boundaries are there to be explored carefully. Reflecting on much fruitful work already achieved, he recommended as the best way forward the making of good interdisciplinary maps of the territory. His own conclusion about mental health? That it is, *'A state of well-being in which the individual gives attentive awareness to self and others in the context of transcendent reality'*. His paper was greeted with hearty applause.

Founding Chair of the SSIG, psychiatrist **Andrew Powell**, marking his retirement from the Executive Committee, then took the stage in conversation with Chris Cook about the genesis and early days of the group. There was concern at the time that overemphasis on scientific

materialism could deprive psychiatry of its soul. The aim was to establish respect for diverse opinion, to champion the value of personal experience, and to offer SSIG members the opportunity to speak freely in questioning the nature and purpose of the human spirit in health and sickness. Contributions from three of Andrew's specially invited co-founders added colour to the proceedings, and David Lorimer's presence confirmed the importance of the Network in bringing such like-minded psychiatrists together.

The third speaker, **Baroness Sheila Hollins**, another past president of the Royal College, spoke of her work as Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee at the Centre for Child Protection at the Pontifical Gregorian University. An appointee of Pope Francis to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors in Rome, she is also a member of the UK's All Party Parliamentary Group on Adult Survivors of Childhood Abuse. Her presentation emphasised spirituality as relevant to the healing of people who have been abused; also the problems of on-line abuse, extortion, sexting, cyber-bullying and harassment; and concluded that too few health professionals and pastoral workers were skilled at dealing with abuse, despite safeguarding requirements becoming better established in recent times. They tended to be problematically bureaucratic and process-oriented, 'tick-box' rather than open, compassionate and friendly.

During the lunch interval, delegates had the opportunity to take in seven excellent poster presentations on a range of spiritually relevant topics. Afterwards, **Professor John Peteet** from Harvard Medical School, president of the American Psychiatric Association's Caucus on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry, spoke about the US experience, expressing some envy at how well the Royal College was doing, for example regarding the existence of the SSIG, and notably its role in the publication of the College's 2013 Position Statement, *'Recommendations for Psychiatrists on Spirituality and Religion'*. Referencing the considerable volume of research on religion, spirituality and mental health, for example that led by Harold Koenig at Duke University, he admitted that in USA, *'Most advances are*



yet to be widely implemented'. He went on to speak at some length about identifying the core elements of transcendence, and the positive outcomes transcendent experience brings.

In a refreshing interlude entitled *'Compassion - the heart of what we do'*, psychiatrist **Sarah Egger** then conducted a 30-minute workshop, encouraging delegates to discuss the topic of compassion together in pairs. Nuggets of wisdom that emerged during the subsequent plenary discussions included:

Compassion involves sharing pain (from the Latin, cum + passio = to suffer with); You've got to feel it before you can heal it!

Self-compassion: Caring for others requires caring for yourself.

Compassion includes attending, understanding, empathising and then helping. It requires both courage and wisdom.

Sarah also quoted a memorable short poem:

When the sunshine of loving-kindness

Meets the tears of suffering,

The rainbow of compassion appears.

The final paper of the day was presented by psychologist **Dr Sylvia Mohr** from Switzerland, who has been working at Siem Reap in Cambodia. In this region of over 1 million people, there are only three psychiatrists and no psychiatric hospital. Dr Mohr's presentation was particularly remarkable because it described, with video footage, a three-hour ritual ceremony in a Buddhist pagoda that she had attended, during which a young

French woman known to her, suffering an enduring psychotic illness, was apparently completely healed and still fully well at six-monthly follow-up. Several similar cases were also described. In brief summary, patients (who were not Buddhist, nor did they understand the languages used) went into a deep hypnotic state. To the accompaniment of continuous singing and the chanting of Buddhist instructions and prayers, they 'died' symbolically, and were later 'reborn' whole, reunited with the 19 'souls' from their past life that had gone missing. They entered, in other words, a 'liminal' state, crossing over and returning from the boundaries between conscious and unconscious, worldly and spiritual realities, life and death.

These were just the kind of borderlands Christopher Cook had been exhorting people to explore and map out in his paper, seeming to add a further tribute to the pioneering courage of both those who set up the SSIG and those who will be taking it forward. This presentation thus brought serendipitous closure to a splendidly upbeat milestone event in what will hopefully be a very long and increasingly fruitful journey for the SSIG and its members.

There remained only the final **plenary session**, to which all previous speakers contributed, responding to comments and questions from the floor, together with a well-deserved **gift presentation** to Andrew with warm thanks for his dedication to the SSIG over the past twenty years, before the celebratory **drinks reception** and the cutting of a magnificently decorated cake to conclude a most memorable day.

* Andrew Powell, Peter Fenwick, Julian Candy & Larry Culliford

Larry Culliford (SMN) is a retired psychiatrist and author of several books, articles, and a long-running blog, on topics such as happiness, personal development, spirituality, and wisdom. He is a former Chair of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain & Ireland. His latest title, The Big Book of Wisdom, was published in March 2020 by Hero Press of London. Larry's website: www ldc52.co.uk Email: larry@ldc52.co.uk.

Network News

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.

Rescheduling of Events

As reported in the electronic newsletter, the pandemic crisis has obliged us to reschedule all our events up to July. The I Ching weekend has been rescheduled for the weekend of October 17-18, while the Mystics and Scientists has been postponed until next April, with the same programme and at Horsley Park over the weekend of April 11-13. The residential annual meeting has also been cancelled, but Dr Andrew Fellows will give his talk on the morning of Saturday, July 4 as a webinar. We will be in communication about the exact timing of the actual annual general meeting.

We had over 90 people attending sessions at our Mystics and Scientists Extra Session entitled *One Mind, One Planet, One Health - New Dimensions of Interconnectedness* with Dr Serge Beddington-Behrens, Alasdair Philips, Shakti Caterina Maggi and Dr Larry Dossey. The Zoom format enabled these contributions to be made from Majorca, Scotland, Italy and the US, and we also had participants from around the world. Recordings are available to purchase at www.mysticsandscientists.org.

As you will also see from the calendar on the inside front cover, we are arranging monthly evening webinars and, hopefully, one Saturday webinar a month – the one for May 16 has already set up and I am working on June and July.

New Format Newsletter – *Towards a New Renaissance*

We hope that you received a copy of the new format newsletter released in the middle of April. If not, please check your spam box as we know that the mailing system has been diverting our emails, which has been the case with myself as well. We are therefore switching to a different provider. The new newsletter features blogs and video links as well as a podcast recommendation and a book review read out loud and posted online on I-Tunes, Spotify and Red Circle under the same title as the Newsletter. We hope to send these out roughly twice a month.

Dr Vasileios Basios Joins the Board



Dr. Vasileios Basios is a senior researcher at the Physics of Complex Systems Department of the University of Brussels, conducting interdisciplinary research on self-organisation and emergence in complex matter as well as aspects of the foundations of complex systems. During his formative years he worked within the team of Ilya Prigogine (Nobel laureate) at the Solvay Institutes for Physics and

Chemistry in Brussels. He is interested on the history of ideas in science and their role in the transformation of science beyond the prevailing mechanistic world-view. He also maintains a keen interest in contemporary research avenues that have started to lead us to a new renaissance, concerned with the renewal of a “re-enchanting” nature.

For the future Vasileios envisions helping create a “mycelium” of research labs, people and networks capable of launching collaborative outreach projects that can bring forth a self-reflecting interdisciplinary science of consciousness. And to help in bringing forth a fundamental shift in our understanding of nature which at the same time will herald a fundamental shift in this very nature of our understanding.

PROF FREEMAN DYSON, FRS, 1923-2020, Honorary Member



Freeman Dyson was one of the greatest scientists and mathematicians of his generation as well as a best-selling author. I met him at a meeting organised by John Cornwell on Science and Human Dimension at Jesus College, Cambridge in 1995, so he has been an honorary member since that date. My other indirect connection with him is through Winchester College, where I taught in the 1980s, and where Freeman grew up as his father Sir George Dyson was Director of Music and he subsequently went on to become the Director of the Royal College of Music.

The Institute for Advanced Study (IAS), which was Dyson's academic home for more than 60 years, announced his death.

"No life is more entangled with the Institute and impossible to capture—architect of modern particle physics, free-range mathematician, advocate of space travel, astrobiology and disarmament, futurist, eternal graduate student, rebel to many preconceived ideas including his own, thoughtful essayist, all the time a wise observer of the human scene," stated Robbert Dijkgraaf, IAS Director and Leon Levy Professor. "His secret was simply saying 'yes' to everything in life, till the very end. We are blessed and honoured that Freeman, Imme, and their family made the Institute their home. It will be so forever."

Dyson was awarded the Templeton Prize in 2000 and in his address at the ceremony, he called for more respect and understanding between scientists and theologians, noting:

"Science and religion are two windows that people look through, trying to understand the big universe outside, trying to understand why we are here. The two windows give different views, but they look out at the same universe. Both views are one-sided, neither is complete. Both leave out essential features of the real world. And both are worthy of respect."

Weaving together reflections on history, ethics, genetics, and theology, he proposed a poetic principle for the universe as he saw it:

"When we look at the glory of stars and galaxies in the sky and the glory of forests and flowers in the living world around us, it is evident that God loves diversity," he said. "Perhaps the universe is constructed according to a principle of maximum diversity. The principle of maximum diversity says that the laws of nature, and the initial conditions at the beginning of time, are such as to make the universe as interesting as possible." [taken from the Templeton Foundation notice]. A comprehensive obituary on the website of the Institute for Advanced Study: <https://www.ias.edu/press-releases/2020/freeman-j-dyson-1923%E2%80%932020>

Appointment of Directors, 2020

Nicholas Pilbrow writes: During the past year **Dr Vasileios Basios**, **Ms Molly Hackney** and **Mr Jose Montemayor** were co-opted as director and **Dr. David Leech** resigned in February 2020.

Each year one third of the member appointed directors, who have served the longest, retire by rotation and all the co-opted members. They are, if they wish, eligible for re-election or co-option. The directors retiring by rotation are **Mr Paul Kieniewicz** (2015), **Dr. Paul Filmore** (2016 – Chairman), **Mr. Richard Irwin** (2015) and those resigning as directors co-opted during the year **Dr Vasileios Basios**, **Ms Molly Hackney** and **Mr Jose Montemayor**. All those retiring are eligible for re-election or co-option and all have indicated their wish to continue. The remaining Directors are **Dr. Joan Walton** (2017), **Mrs. Jacqueline Nielsen** (2005), **Mr. Tuvi Orbach** (2014)

There are now up to four possible vacancies for Directors to be elected at the Annual General Meeting and four further vacancies available by co-option by the Board.

Members who wish to be considered for these vacancies are requested to apply by the end of May, 2020 by sending their C.V. and a short note on how they see themselves contributing to the aims of the Network. This will enable the Board to consider how they would match the tasks to be performed and, where appropriate, make recommendations to the members. The members of the company will follow the recommendations of the Network AGM, unless there is good reason not to do so. Applications should be sent by email to the Manager, Andrew Polson, Andrew@scimednet.org.

PROFESSOR KEITH CRITCHLOW, 1933-2010



Professor Keith Critchlow was an architect and co-founder of Temenos in 1981, and later President of the Temenos Academy. The many beautiful buildings Keith designed as

architect include the Krishnamurti Centre, Brockwood Park, Hampshire and the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences in Puttaparthi, India. He developed the Visual and Islamic Traditional Arts (VITA) programme now housed at the Prince's Foundation in Shoreditch. Keith gave a number of memorable illustrated lectures at Mystics and Scientists conferences, always seamlessly using two alternating slide projectors. He had deep knowledge of the mysteries

of Chartres Cathedral and his publications include publications include *Order in Space* (1969), *Islamic Patterns* (1976), *Time Stands Still* (1979), *The Hidden Geometry of Flowers* (2011) and *Golden Meaning* (2014). A short film about his work was shown at the 70th Birthday Celebrations of HRH the Prince of Wales, who is Patron on Temenos. This can be seen at <https://www.temenosacademy.org/professor-keith-critchlow-2018/> where you can also find a full obituary.



LOCAL GROUP NEWS

LONDON GROUP

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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.

■ JANUARY



We started the year with a presentation from RUPERT SHELDRAKE on his latest book *Ways to Go Beyond: and Why They Work*. Rupert is a biologist and author of 8 books and more than 85 technical papers. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, USA and also an Honorary Member of the SMN.

Rupert started by talking about spiritual practices and religious practices, pointing out that spiritual practices are understood as having a more secular connotation than religious practices. Religion and spirituality as concepts are often conflated or separated in ways which creates confusion in people's minds. But in this talk Rupert addressed practices which are available for scientific research in other words spiritual practices which have measurable effects. His first book on this theme – *Science and Spiritual Practices* – was on traditional spiritual practices; this one is on non-traditional ones. Rupert pointed out that spiritual practices have as their aim to quieten the mind, and many meditative techniques aim to do so by bringing the mind into the present. In sports, an activity not normally associated with spiritual practices, the mind of participants is concentrated on the present moment to the exclusion of everything else. This reduces the activity of the Default Mode Network (DMN) the part of the brain involved in rumination and internal dialogue. Many people who take part in sports games Rupert told us, have spiritual experiences. Dangerous sports in particular, require the person to be absolutely in the present and a high tight-rope walker told Rupert, he feels closest to God when performing his skill on the tight-rope, often walking across the void between two high-rise buildings. Being in such a flow, shuts down the DMN and the mind quietsens down.

Another spiritual pursuit of benefit is fasting, which is not only healthy for the physical body, but also gives greater clarity of mind. Next we heard about meditation and prayer, in particular petitioning prayer. This type of prayer depends on a belief in the transcendent, God, angels, ancestors or other beings. It involves the belief that the mind is transparent to the being prayed to in terms of both the form and content of the

communication. An activity which parallels petitioning prayer are the candles we light in churches. They may be coping mechanism but, he said, it works. Rupert considers meditation as the inbreath and petitioning prayer as the outbreath. He ended his presentation talking about the three-fold aspects of spiritual practices: the 'I am' – which is the presence, the Logos, which is the content and Spirit, the flow, the movement, the breath.

■ FEBRUARY



This was the last presentation before the lockdown. We hosted NICHOLAS MAXWELL who entitled his talk *Can Universities Save Us from Disaster?* Nicholas taught Philosophy of Science at University College London for thirty years and is now Emeritus Reader. He has devoted much

of his life arguing that we need to bring a revolution in universities so they come to seek and promote wisdom and not just acquire knowledge. Nicholas described the difficulties we are facing globally at the moment, from climate change to destruction of natural habitat, inequality of wealth and power etc. The reasons for this, he argues, comes from the fact that the aims of inquiry are fundamentally flawed. And the blame lies in the way universities conduct their research. He says humanity's problems are twofold: understanding the universe and understanding self and nature. Whereas in his opinion we have solved the first problem, the second he says, has not been addressed and this constitutes the fundamental problem. He identifies two kinds of inquiry: knowledge inquiry and wisdom inquiry. Knowledge inquiry is well developed in the universities but Nicholas argues that wisdom inquiry is not. Humanity needs to learn to become civilised, and the role of universities should be to help us in this endeavour.

Nicholas suggests we must get clearer on the methods of science to understand the natural world, to generalise methods so they can be useful to any endeavour, not just science and then get those methods to address problems of society. Problems of living he argues, and not problems of knowledge should be at the heart of academia, and the basic aim of inquiry should change from growth of knowledge to growth of wisdom. Nicholas' enthusiasm and passion for his 'crusade' were clear to see however there was scepticism voiced by academics present with respect to the viability of his proposals.

■ MARCH

This month's talk had to be cancelled due to the pandemic which struck early in the month.

■ APRIL

As the weeks went on, it became clear that we could do our presentations online so we readjusted our programme accordingly. Providing the presentation as a webinar online meant that we could have a much wider reach than just London. Having emailed a large SMN list, we signed up 100 people from all around the world who wanted to hear Gary Lachman's talk on *Dark Star Rising: Magick and Power in the Age of Trump*. This unusual spelling of the word was introduced by Aleister Crowley and means 'the science and art of inducing change in conformity to the will'. And it is in this sense that Gary Lachman uses it.



GARY LACHMAN is the author of 22 books on consciousness, culture and western esoteric traditions, which have been translated in 12 languages around the world. He also writes for various journals in the UK, the US and Europe.

The talk was a fascinating perspective on what might have assisted the election of Donald Trump in 2016. Through his attention to detail Lachman noticed material that showed up in the media following Trump's election and followed it up with meticulous research. He noted that Richard Spencer, a leader of the ultra-right group National Policy Institute started a conference with the words 'hail Trump, hail our hero, we made this happen'. Lachman's research led him to identify the connection between this utterance and New Thought. The concept of New Thought is associated with Positive Thinking. It goes back to the 19th century and a number of well-known names such as William James and Ralph Waldo Emerson have written about it. At the root of this thinking is the idea that the mind is powerful and that ideas can manifest in reality. The interface between inner and outer reality is porous.

We heard in great detail how writers, thinkers, leaders representing various ideologies have used these principles to influence their followers, some aiming to induce positive changes in people's health and living but others focusing more on power and control. Trump himself is an adept of these principles which he learned from the Rev Norman Vincent Peale. As a young man he was taken by his father to hear Peale's sermons. Trump's own books reflect those principles, as do his attitudes and utterances. He is forever positive even in the light of unrealistic expectations and does not entertain negativity. Everything is possible and what he dreams of will become reality. Facts are not important,

attitude is. Chaos magic was also brought into this mix, a type of magic that affects reality without the use of formal means, by using the chaotic nature of events. Lachman mentioned Trump as a natural chaos magician pointing out the chaotic nature of Trump's early months in office evidenced by the sackings and moving of people in the Administration.

Chaos magician talk of reality not being stable. And this links in to the current post-modernist paradigm. Lachman reminded us that Nietzsche foresaw and was concerned about the impending advent of nihilism. Heidegger also questioned the Platonic pursuit of truth and we have Derrida arguing that reality is a construct. There naturally follows current post-modernism, in which there is no Reality and no Truth.

Amongst others, we heard the name of Steve Bannon as someone who was an active element in this movement (which spans the globe) associated with Putin's Russia and the Rasputin-like figure of Alexander Dugin. This particular topic will be part of the new book Lachman is writing on Russia.

Lachman went on to talk about memes and their influence via the internet, the character of Pepe the Frog which acquired a Trump face, and the concepts of Tulpa and Eggregore, visualisations which become externalised in lived reality.

The ideas of positive thinking and chaos magic are considered 'low magic' because they are developed for personal gain. Gary's presentation provided us with a lens to look at Trump's behaviour which rather than unpredictable and random is in fact coherent and consistent with the tactics of chaos magic which enhance his power.

The talk is available as a video recording for purchase for £8 at the link bit.ly/LachmanDarkstar.

MEMBERS' ARTICLES AND ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Available through links or from dl@scimednet.org

COVID-19

There has been the inevitable avalanche of articles and among the most interesting are:

Charles Eisenstein

■ *The Coronation, 20 pp – a brilliant and penetrating analysis.*

Martin Winiecki, Tamara Community

■ *Searching for the Anti-Virus – COVID-19 as a Quantum Phenomenon, published in Kosmos Journal and looking at the possibilities for a radical transformation - https://www.kosmosjournal.org/kj_article/searching-for-the-anti-virus-covid-19-as-quantum-phenomenon/*

Stephen A. Schwartz

■ *Covid-19 and The Documented Failure of the American Illness Profit System, 7 pp.*

Frontline Critical Care Working Group

■ *Recommended Protocol for NY Hospitals including high dose intravenous Vitamin C, 4 pp.*

Paul S. Anderson

■ *Intravenous Ascorbic Acid (IVAA) for COVID-19 Supportive Treatment in Hospitalized COVID-19 Patients (Based on use in China and US settings), 4 pp.*

Professor Kylie O'Brien PhD and Professor Ian Brighthope MBBS, FACNEM

■ *Nutritional Medicine: Not a Soft Approach to Combatting COVID-19, 5 pp.*

BMJ Rapid Response

■ *Comments on Vitamin D, 17 pp.*

Nicanor Perlas

■ *Covid-19 Pandemic: The Philippine Experience The Case for a Precision Quarantine and Immunity (PQI) Approach - A Briefing Paper, 38 pp.*

A. K. Mukhopadhyay, MD

■ *Post Covid-19 Worldview: Science, Economics, Psychology and Behaviour, 7 pp.*

A. K. Mukhopadhyay, MD

■ *Life-Form A Matters-Syncytium: Deep Science for Matter Correlates of Conscious States, 16 pp.*

Anne Baring

■ *My view of the situation – blog for Ubiquity University, 1 page – very succinct.*

B Les Lancaster

- *The Third Narrative: Corona and the Collective Psyche*, 4 pp.

Neil Howard, University of Bath

- *Organising for the Future Beyond the Coronacrisis: a UK Perspective*, 25 pp.

Roger Nelson

- *Global Consciousness Project network reactions to coronavirus and market news*, 4 pp.

The Global Consciousness Project (GCP) network is an instrument designed to capture evidence of a possible unconscious interconnection that we think may be fostered by resonant sharing of emotions among large numbers of people.

Dr Jude Currivan

- *Healing our Worldview*, 1 page.

SCIENCE/PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

Steven M. Rosen

- *Quantum Gravity and Taoist Cosmology: Exploring the ancient origins of phenomenological string theory*, 27 pp. from *Progress in Physics and Molecular Biology*.

Steven M. Rosen

- *Pauli's Dream – Jung, Modern Physics and Alchemy*, 21 pp from *Quadrant*, 2014, 44 (2), 49–71.

Amrit Sorli Srecko

- *Intuitive Intelligence in Physics*, 84 pp.

Amrit Sorli Srecko and Stefan Celan

- *Integration of Life and Consciousness into Cosmology*, 9 pp. from *Journal of Advances in Physics* Vol 17 (2020) ISSN: 2347-3487

European Parliament

- *Effects of 5G Wireless Communication on Human Health*, 11 pp.

Jess M Mulder

- *The Limits of Reductionism – 14 pp*, Godel Essay Prize Winner

George Ellis, FRS

- *Why Reductionism Does Not Work - Godel Essay Prize Essay*, 28 pp.

Nisha J. Manek, William A. Tiller

- *A New Perspective on “the Placebo Effect”: Untangling the entanglement*, 6 pp.

Nisha J. Manek

- *Symmetry States of the Physical Space: An Expanded Reference Frame for Understanding Human Consciousness*, 10 pp. from *JACM*, 2012

John Kapp

- *Was Jupiter the father of the planets?* 3 pp.
- Symmetrical Impermanence*, 4 pp
- These articles build on the work of John's father, R.O. Kapp.
- Proof of Astrology*, 2 pp.
- *comments on planetary alignments for March*.

CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

Harald Walach

- *Inner Experience – Direct Access to Reality: A Complementarist Ontology and Dual Aspect Monism Support a Broader Epistemology*, 14 pp. from *Frontiers in Psychology and developed from the Galileo Commission Report*.

Stephan A. Schwartz

- *The transformation - nonlocal consciousness becomes a fundamental in our reality*, 3 pp.

Stephan A. Schwartz

- *What would the world be like if the matrix of consciousness were recognized?* 4 pp.

Ravi Ravindra

- *Yoga and a Future Science of Consciousness*, 6 pp. first published in 1999 in the *Network* volume *Wider Horizons*.

Ravi Ravindra

- *Knowing and Being*, 8 pp. Addresses the key question of greatness of being and knowing in sages and scientists respectively.

Paul Hague

- *Mapping the Cosmic Psyche*, 18 pp.

Jaume Agustí-Cullell

- *Reflections on Human and Artificial Intelligence*, 6 pp.

GENERAL

Alex Evans

- *A Larger Us (Collective Psychology Project)*, 22 pp. A very important paper – see also my review of Alex's book.

Prof. J. Leroy Hulsey PhD, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Zhili Quan PhD, Fen Xiao PhD

- *A Structural Reevaluation of the Collapse of World Trade Center 7 – 125 pp*. A ground-breaking four-year study that systematically demolishes the official NIST Report. “The objective of the study was threefold: (1) Examine the structural response of WTC 7 to fire loads that may have occurred on September 11, 2001; (2) Rule out scenarios that could not have caused the observed collapse; and (3) Identify types of failures and their locations that may have caused the total collapse to occur as observed.”

Steven Jones, Robert Korol, Anthony Szamboti and Ted Walter

- *On the Physics of High-Rise Building Collapses*, 6 pp. Refers to 9/11 WTC Collapses including Building 7 referred to above.

William Ophuls (see also review section and www.ophuls.org)

- *Disruption*, 8 pp.
- Apologies to the Grandchildren*, 23 pp.

Simon Evitts, Brendan Seale, Dylan Skybrook

- *Developing an Interconnected Worldview: A Guiding Process for Learning*, 98 pp.

ONLINE ARTICLES BY ANTHONY JUDGE

- *Symbolic Disconnection from the Stars and the Universe?*
Surreptitious global implementation of full-spectrum dominance and shielding
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/starlite.php>
- *Reimagining Coronavirus in 3D as a Metaphor of Global Society in Distress*
Crowning pattern that connects spiky organisms, satellite constellations, nuclear explosions, and egomania?
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/musings/corona.php>
- *Social Distancing under Conditions of Overcrowding?*
Weaponising mass distraction from overpopulation denial?
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/socdist.php>
- *Cognitive Engagement with Spike Dynamics of a Polyhedral Coronavirus*
Alternation between assertive arrays and systemic patterns of comprehensible coherence
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/polyspik.php>
- *Alternating between Complementary Images of Coronavirus*
Requisite variety to enable viable strategic engagement
<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/covimage.php>

NEWS

Pari Perspectives

The Pari Center in Tuscany was founded by late honorary member F. David Peat, and his daughter Eleanor is now the president, with Shantena August Sabbatini vice president. You can apply to join the Center as a Friend and you will then receive the superbly produced quarterly *Pari Perspectives*, subtitled 'ideas in science, the arts, spirit and community. I have the second issue in front of me, which is themed on the Quest for Wholeness. It contains a significant article by Basil Hiley on his 30-year collaboration with David Bohm which provides a corrective to the mainstream view of his work as noted in my review of a new book by Lee Smolin below; there is also excellent article by Bohm himself on a New Order for Physics. Other features include Theology for the Third Millennium, Goethe's Delicate Empiricism and Chris Todhunter on the work of Christopher Alexander. The magazine is large format and beautifully illustrated. Much of the physical programme of the Center has moved online, and I joined one of their community calls recently. www.paricenter.com

Vitamin C and the treatment of Covid-19

The editor of *Caduceus*, Simon Best, alerted me to the use of high-dose intravenous ascorbic acid in the treatment of COVID-19, and I have listened to a number of presentations - including Dr Richard Cheng whose article we feature - as well as reading many articles on this topic (see especially www.orthomolecular.org). The research approach was developed by Linus Pauling, one of the very few people to receive two Nobel prizes, one for chemistry and the other for peace. It is not popular with mainstream medicine but this could be a watershed moment in what amounts to a paradigm war



between natural and biochemical approaches, the first emphasising the importance of immune system status, and the second drug intervention developed by the immensely powerful pharmaceutical industry that dominates policy, medical education, government committees and journals. However, the anti-viral, anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties of Vitamin C have in fact been well documented over many decades from the 1940s. It turns out that white blood cells depend on Vitamin C and are capable of accumulating it. There is an excellent briefing online on the Facebook page of Dr Andrew Saul - <https://www.facebook.com/themegavitaminman/videos/617212055523422/>

Then this from Alliance for Natural Health - <https://www.anhinternational.org/news/call-for-concerted-action-on-vitamin-c-in-cstarvstard-crisis/>

Finally, this compilation contains 90 references on Vitamins C and D:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uLormkjoKO5JmKQh80-nGiKk-X5Ik5idi3gWqwd_Up4/edit

book reviews

Books in this section can be purchased via the Network web site (www.scimednet.org) from Amazon.co.uk and the Network will receive a 10% commission. In addition, the Network receives a 5% commission on all sales if you log on through our web site!

SCIENCE-PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

THE POWER OF INTENTION

David Lorimer

■ BRIDGING SCIENCE AND SPIRIT

Dr Nisha Manek

Conscious Creation LLC, 2019,
437 pp., \$18.99, p/b – ISBN
978-1-950599-00-8

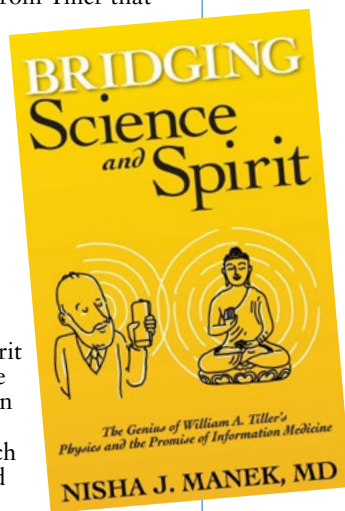
Although I had heard of Tiller's work, I was unfamiliar with any detail until reading this excellent introductory book on his physics and information medicine. The author is a physician who has spent a lot of time with Bill Tiller and also in close study of his work on psychoenergetics. The book begins with a quote from Tiller that his work is designed to 'help build a reliable bridge of understanding for humans that seamlessly joins the foundations of traditional science on one end, extends through the domains of the psyche, emotion, and mind and is firmly planted in the bedrock of Spirit at the other end.' The book consists of seven pillars and 52 short chapters covering such areas as mind beyond brain and levels of being, thermodynamics, entropy and information, experiments on human intention, space and light, subtle energy and information medicine, and the energy of love in evolving towards *homo spiritus*.

The 'bridges of understanding' constitute general unifying principles emerging from detailed observations leading to greater understanding and coherence. In terms of health, the proposition is that humans are not just chemistry, but rather a mix of

energy, information and Spirit (the text is supplemented with helpful illustrative cartoons). Psychoenergetic phenomena include distant healing, telepathy, spoon bending, remote viewing, mind/machine interaction and psychokinesis, all of which will be familiar to most readers of this journal and beyond the frame of reference of conventional neuroscience that restricts consciousness to the brain. The author suggests that 'looking for physical explanations of consciousness is like attacking a piano with a sledgehammer to get at the concerto imprisoned inside.' (p. 90) The brain is more like a user interface where the conscious mind imparts meaning to information. The author also draws on David Hawkins to suggest that consciousness is a continuum of levels – interestingly, Tiller's book *Psychoenergetic Science* tested at a level beyond the intellect into the realm of the heart - Tiller does not divide these in himself.

A basic contention is that the intention is a process of conscious creation - with which we are all immediately familiar. For Tiller, science is a verb not a noun, an activity and means of enquiry that performs useful work whereby 'work means [that] consciousness via intention must be a source of energy' - a key contention in terms of energy and thermodynamics

lies in the work of Shannon demonstrating that information is as important as energy and matter, while the observer is inextricably linked to the system. This leads to an innovative formulation whereby there is a form of Gibbs free energy ΔG that can be ascribed to mind, emotion, consciousness and intention. This represents an inside-out science where the protocol begins with a powerful intention statement that is experimentally applied to water; the protocol includes a physically written



intention, visualisation, writing equations and the affirmation 'They will be done'.

The experimental question is whether such an intention can be stably imprinted on an external device, which Tiller calls the Intention Host Device or IHD. Alongside this he set up a control unimprinted electronic device (UED) - the intention was to change the pH of the water sample. However, he found a case of 'macroscopic information entanglement' whereby the water in the UED was also transformed! After two months, the pH of the water had decreased by one unit in accordance with the stated intention - rather a staggering result. This led him to postulate that human intention can affect empty space, which seems to be related to a DC magnetic field polarity effect (p. 208). Here he distinguishes between the familiar four-dimensional world of matter governed by electromagnetism and the gravity as 'direct space' (D-space) and a second dimension that has magnetic wave information characteristics but not material stuff, which he calls reciprocal space or 'R-space'. He also defines a mathematical relationship between these two spaces with Fourier transform geometry whereby 'the R-space's pilot waves guide D-space particles and matter such as electrons, parallel to the ideas developed by Dirac and de Broglie with the difference that these waves are superluminal and magnetic. Hence, the virtual R-space is a high-resolution blueprint of information overlaying our world.' (p. 219) The R-space 'is the medium whereby the information is transferred' and entails information entanglement through what he calls 'deltrons'. Insofar as I understand the technical details, this seems to me a major theoretical advance, highly relevant to parapsychology.

We humans are capable of field effects, for instance using the power of intention and emotion in the imprinting process. Here there is an interesting theoretical example where a man succeeds in conditioning the space of his garage so that he manages to create an over-unity energy machine. However, independent replication fails because of the different quality of R-space partly conditioned by emotion in the original space. This seems like a form of experimenter effect. This also provides a context for distant healing as well as higher energy systems present within the physical body, pointing in the direction of the future information medicine at different levels. The author proposes that chemical medicine sits in D-space,

energy medicine in a combination of D- and R-space while information medicine is exclusively in R-space and informed by Spirit, effectively representing Universal Mind. This leads to a fascinating comparison between the field effects of relics and a Tiller IHD in terms of capacity for conditioning space leading to an experiment whereby the IHD energy information is successfully transferred to the UED (p. 291), 'a reduction in entropy by the loving-kindness information.'

We arrive at a conclusion that science is a path to self-knowledge and that 'Science and Spirit are a necessary unity.' At the time of writing, people are coming together to meditate whereby we create a field 'raising the symmetry of space' and creating an atmosphere that is coherent and palpable in sacred places. In the case of advanced saints and sages like Padre Pio, this may even result in the physical body becoming incorruptible, somehow transforming the very matter normally subject to entropic decay. All this gives pause for thought, while the book as a whole points way beyond our current conceptual limits.

AN INVOLUNTARY HEALTH EXPERIMENT

David Lorimer

■ EMF*D

Dr Joseph Mercola
(www.mercola.com)

Hay House, 2020, 339 pp.,
\$24.99, h/b -
ISBN 978-1-401-95876

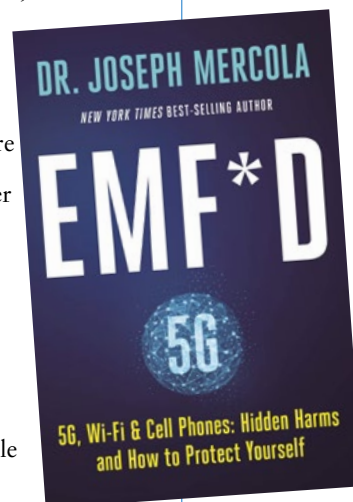
Joseph Mercola is a physician whose website is the most visited for natural health and who issues a daily newsletter. As it happens, there is an article today about the signing into law of the 5G Act in the US, which will 'force Americans to receive unprecedented exposure to the millimetre wave (MMW).' These shorter wavelengths will in turn require many more transmitters, and as I write SpaceX has already launched 400 of a projected 42,000 satellites designed to provide blanket 5G coverage - and EMF exposure - for the whole planet, with 1 million base stations currently approved. As those already up to speed on the topic will know, no prior industry studies have been carried out on the potential

effects on human health and indeed on cell life in general - this was openly admitted in a Senate hearing in answer to a question by Sen Richard Blumenthal. Another key issue is that FCC and ICNIRP safety guidelines are based on the outdated and indeed scientifically discredited criterion (see e.g. www.5GSpaceAppeal.org) measuring only thermal heating via cell phones. Both the FCC and ICNIRP have in my view been captured by the telecoms industry (see pp. 74 ff.) in connivance with governments who want to maximise associated economic growth associated with a 'smart' Internet of things which at the same time enhances the capacity for surveillance and potentially for digital control.

In this authoritative treatment based on over 70 pages of scientific references, the author provides a highly informative account, beginning with a basic understanding of EMFs then moving on to ways in which they cause cellular damage to the body and contribute to the development of disease. He then explains how we can repair EMF-related damage and how to reduce our EMF exposure. One of his overall arguments is that the telecoms industry is following the tactics previously used by the tobacco industry in denying adverse effects 'and funding low-risk studies that assure a positive result.' The industry then claims that the science is inconclusive - 'doubt is their product.' The author shows how our exposure to EMFs has progressively increased over the last 100 years (by a factor of 10^{18}), and that the implementation of 5G is an order of magnitude increase in pulsed EMF exposure, representing a massive involuntary health experiment. In this sense, 5G is an addition to existing capacity, not a replacement of it - it is attractive to the industry because no installation of cables is required, while Mercola himself recommends the adoption of fibre-optic cables (p. 56) instead.

The fourth chapter explains in detail how EMFs damage the body, explaining the significance of voltage-gated calcium channels (VGCCs) that facilitate cellular damage through increasing oxidative stress by creating free radicals, and

in particular peroxynitrite, that can cause inflammation and damage 'cell membranes, proteins, mitochondria, stem cells and DNA.'



(p. 91, and see www.bioinitiative.org for a 650-page report containing 1,800 new studies documenting the health effects of EMFs). Earlier, the author had explained how ionising and non-ionising radiation both cause cellular damage, but in different ways. Appendix B lists the principal categories of harmful effects in terms of cellular DNA damage, lowered fertility, neuropsychiatric effects, cell death, free radical damage, in endocrine/hormonal effects and cancers. Plants, trees, animals and insects are also affected, but the population most vulnerable to EMF damage is children (p. 109). The next chapter explains in more detail the research into EMFs and disease, including tinnitus, disruption to the blood-brain and intestinal barriers, impaired sleep and increased susceptibility to degenerative and neurodegenerative conditions. Then there is a small percentage of people who are electromagnetically hypersensitive (3%) - EHS, which is not recognised by the medical establishment. Anecdotal evidence that I have read recently about 5G in streetlights in Birmingham suggests strong adverse effects within this group.

The next two chapters are devoted to help and advice for repairing EMF-related damage and reducing EMF exposure, which is aligned to other lifestyle factors and partly represented by maintaining NAD+ levels within the body. The first thing to know is sources of EMFs, for instance in computers, wireless connections, cell phones, microwaves, portable phones and baby monitors. The author recommends various meters and forms of shielding in an extensive resources section. Interestingly, major insurance companies including Lloyd's of London have excluded EMF claims from their policies. Reading this book can be a first step in becoming better informed about this unprecedented challenge to our health and steps we can take to mitigate this. For those who are already familiar, it provides a wealth of background scientific information. A must read in the current circumstances.

CONVERGING ON UNITY

David Lorimer

■ ON THE MYSTERY OF BEING

Edited by Zaya and Maurizio Benazzo

Reveal Press, 2019, 224 pp., \$16.95, p/b – ISBN 978-1-68403-395-9

I had the pleasure of meeting the editors who are also the founders of

SAND (Science and Non-duality) when presenting in Italy last summer (my presentation is on their YouTube channel, along with an interview). I share the view expressed by Fritjof Capra in endorsing this book: "Human civilisation will only survive if we are able to create communities whose members do not find happiness in excessive material consumption, but in relationships among each other and with the entire community of life. This book of many voices shows beautifully that Maurizio and Zaya have created such a community." It was just this sense of community that I briefly experienced at Titignano and I would recommend the community online gatherings on a Saturday evening European time (www.scienceandnonduality.com).

The book consists of seven parts and nearly fifty short pieces on contemporary spirituality, metaphysics, consciousness, nature, the body, intimacy, the shadow, and doorways to heaven.

In his foreword, Deepak Chopra already draws out the importance of understanding and experiencing that "I am That", awakening to choiceless awareness and returning our allegiance to the source. Given the format, readers are provided with many glimpses of insight that can be further followed up in books or practices. The editors remark that 'There is no ultimate truth. No teacher, no scientist will give us all the answers. Let us simply bow to the intelligence of our hearts, drop into not knowing, keep our minds open, cherish the questions, and let answers arise and evolve, all the while celebrating this mystery called life.' (p. 3) The spirit of enquiry pervades the contributions where our very questions are necessarily 'rooted in the structure of consciousness' as Adyashanti observes. Some of the essays in the first part can be used as a point of departure for self-enquiry, such as those from Jeff Foster, Rupert Spira and Dorothy Hunt, who quotes Ramana Maharshi as saying 'The Self is only one. If limited it is the ego, if unlimited, it is Infinite, and it is the Reality.' This says it all....

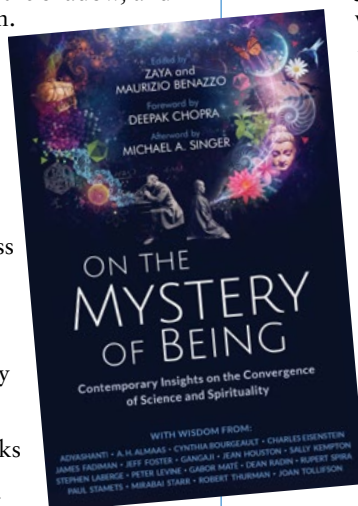
Mauro Bergonzi makes the subtle observation that 'the thinking mind can grasp only concepts, but not the awareness that perceives it as an object. The "water of awareness" can never be detected by the net

of the thinking mind.' (p. 28) A number of contributors relate this to the limitations of a purely objective approach to a science of consciousness. Pete Russell suggests that we need to question our basic assumptions in this respect and takes the view that the brain 'merely determines what appears in consciousness' – a similar thought is expressed by Donald Hoffman in his discussion of how we have evolved a user interface where three-dimensional space is our desktop: 'Space-time is not a fundamental reality. It's a data structure that we evolved. We are living in the matrix of our data structure' and in a world where consciousness is fundamental - this is a realisation that increasing numbers of people are now coming to. Bernardo Kastrup also characterises the brain as the localisation of consciousness.

Charles Eisenstein writes about the ecological initiation, which we are also experiencing in terms of the reset that is likely to come about following lockdown. Many have interpreted the virus as a message from the Earth and a reminder that we need to treat all life as sacred and not simply as a resource to be exploited for our benefit. Many books on science and spirituality would not address the body as teacher, the heart of intimacy and exploring the shadows. However, all these are important dimensions of our humanness

while constituting elements of our interconnectedness. Gabor Mate warns that we neglect our fundamental unity at our peril, observing that our current capitalist system is based on separate and competing individuals and a corresponding materialistic medical philosophy. We need to extend its evidence base and remember his message - so poignant at this time - of the human need for contact, connection and communion: what Thich Nhat Hanh calls inter-being.

Those in intimate relationships will find much nourishment in this section that can help us go deeper, seeing beyond the separate self and even discovering that our true nature is love. Eric Baret comes straight to the point when he writes that 'the ego cannot love, people project onto you the answer to an expectation... The nature of things is love.. Love isn't exclusive, it's inclusive.' We are now being presented with some aspects of our individual and collective



shadows, and this may even generate a sufficient energy of outrage to shift the whole system if enough of us become informed, waking up to our deep identity and inherent freedom, aligning our intentions and actions (see also my review below referring to the fierce feminine in Anaiya Sophia). No reader will draw the same insights from such a wide-ranging book, but there are many gems to be mined and I would also encourage you to engage in the SAND community.

MEDICINE-HEALTH

THERAPY FOR THE EGO-SELF: HAHNEMANN, FREUD & JUNG

Allan Pollock

■ HEALING THE SOUL

David Lilley MBChB, FFHom, LLCO

Volume One - The Lives of Samuel Hahnemann and William Lilley

Saltire Books, 2014, 574 pp., £44.99, h/b - ISBN 978-1-908127-05-1

Volume Two - The Archetype and the Psyche

Saltire Books, 2018, 498 pp., £46.99, h/b - ISBN 978-1-908127-09-9

Few of us have a father with the gift of psychic healing, but it was so in the case of physician Dr David Lilley, a specialist in homeopathic medicine based in South Africa. His dad, William Lilley, had remarkable clairvoyant / clairaudient skills from a young age, and by his teens was a proficient trance-medium. Though 'Billy' was from a poor mining community in Yorkshire, these peculiar abilities led him on a lifelong journey of healing - primarily with homeopathy. His story is too extraordinary to summarise much further here, but suffice to say that William Lilley, channelling the medical skills of a spirit guide ('Dr Letari' 1889-1914, late of Peshawar, India, now Pakistan) and aided by the financial backing of a Leeds industrialist established a number of clinics in England, the largest in Marylebone close to Harley Street during the latter part of WW2, practising both personal and absent (remote) healing. Early the 1950s he moved to South Africa where he continued to work until his death in 1972. His case load amounted to many thousands; his cures the witness of many sufferers; and his skills tested and proven by medically qualified physicians of open mind.

This story is told in full in the second half of the Volume 1 of *Healing the Soul* by his son who qualified in medicine from the University of Pretoria in 1962 subsequently training in both Homeopathy and Osteopathy. Lilley 'junior' did not inherit his father's psychic abilities, yet his childhood experiences, and those as an adult working alongside his father underpin his philosophy as a medical practitioner.

Dr Samuel Hahnemann, whose life David Lilley describes in the first half of the book, set his supremely analytical mind to the nature and treatment of disease. Born in Saxony in 1755, the son of a painter in the porcelain factory in Meissen, Samuel was a polymath to whom the philosophical basis for homeopathy is attributed. A contemporary of Beethoven and Mozart, one ponders - as an aside - the intellectual prowess of the Germanic peoples in those times. Yet unlike these famous contemporaries, few - even in the medical world - know of him, and fewer still have read his insightful *Organon of Medicine*. Granted, as Lilley points out, Hahnemann did not suffer fools gladly, which hardly endeared him to his professional colleagues, but irascibility can be a companion of genius and a necessary catalyst for change.

Hahnemann's complaint was that the endless theories put forward by the physicians of the day as to the inner workings of body, was often pure speculation (the first edition of Gray's Anatomy in 1858 post-dated Hahnemann's death by 15 years). Clearly the opposite is true today, but this should not negate Hahnemann's contribution which was holistic and not reductionist.

A few helpful pages contextualise the influence of the Greek Schools on 18th century medicine (Galen etc.), together with that of Paracelsus in the 16th century, who like Hahnemann perceived both a material (the body) and a non-material realm (life force). For Paracelsus and Hahnemann, it is the latter that is primarily the source of disease, a concept lost in the shadow of the dominant scientific materialist / reductionist model of today. His work as a translator (he

spoke eight languages, as well as being physician and chemist) led him to the *Materia Medica* of Scottish physician William Cullen wherein the curative properties of Cinchona (a source of quinine - hence used to treat intermittent fever or ague) were described. From self-experimentation on the effects of the medicine, the first law of homeopathy, The Law of Similars or *Similia Similibus Curentur* (like cures like) was born. By the end of his life (1843), *The Organon* had gone through five editions, a sixth being published posthumously.

Lilley concludes the story of Hahnemann's life with insights into the life of Dr Constantine Herring (also of Saxony) who was an influential figure in homeopathy in the United States in the later part of the 19th century. The controversy that continues to dog homeopathy to this day is aired in the penultimate chapter in this section entitled '*Pride, prejudice and politics*' - the title is summary enough - and concludes with a look at the nature and purpose of disease; man's dynamic (immaterial) nature; the limitations of materialistic medicine; and the potential relevance of quantum physics.

Having set the stage in Volume 1, Volume 2 moves forward the central theme namely 'Healing the Soul'. Volume 1 looked back at two lives: that of Samuel Hahnemann's as - *inter alia* - scientist and philosopher; and that of William Lilley whose work amply validated Hahnemann's conclusions as to the immaterial or spiritual nature of disease.

The reader may choose - as this reviewer did - to first read part two of Volume 1 (each part about 250 pages). The same might be said for Volume 2 which also has two parts of similar length. The focus of the first part is the *Archetype*, a primal pattern that has polarity - an ideal and its antithesis. The giant thinkers in this field of study - analytical psychology - were Sigmund Freud and his most talented pupil, Carl Gustav Jung, and it is in part two that their work on the Psyche - that totality of the human mind - is looked at in some detail.

Part one opens with an explanation of the term, *Archetype*. The author then considers the atavistic (ancestral) form, reaching back to the Creation and the 'birth' of the first atoms (hydrogen / helium), using data



from the homeopathic 'provings' (the outcome of testing homeopathic remedies on a control group of healthy persons) to illustrate those forms.

The birth of the universe - '*stellar alchemy*' - has great meaning for Dr Lilley, for whom there is most surely both a Cosmic purpose and design. By way of illustration he moves on to consider in some depth two other fundamental elements arising from this stellar alchemy that have deep significance as homeopathic medicines, carbon (*graphites*) and silica (*silicea*). Whilst for the former he concentrates on un-personified characteristics, in the latter case the *silicea* remedy picture is compared with the personality characteristics of such remarkable minds as those of Galileo, Newton and others.

In part two, Freud's psychosexual development stages are appraised, with the occasional foray into the remedy pictures from the homeopathic *materia medica* to illustrate correspondence, together with a retelling of the Oedipus myth from a homeopathic perspective. The profound consequences of 'fixation' during development phases on the psyche, and the potential releasing power of homeopathic treatment is considered, notably through the picture of homeopathic *arsenicum album*, best known - in raw material form - as arsenic trioxide, once the preferred poison of the serial killer. Portraits of some infamous murderers demonstrate the relevance.

Whilst Freud's work has found more acceptance within conventional medicine, it is the later perspective of Jung that best aligns with homeopathy. Dr Lilley sees homeopathy as '*the therapeutic arm of (Jungian) analytical psychology... provid[ing] clear proof of the theoretical conclusions that Jung propounded*'. As with Hahnemann's homeopathy, the implications of Carl Jung's understanding of the spiritual, and his concept of Individuation (spiritual attainment) have yet to be fully appreciated.

The concluding chapters are primarily a reflection on Jungian thought. The symbolism of the pin (needle) is considered, then the archetypal form of the spiral which finds expression in such as *Yin & Yang*, the *Chakras* and *Nadis* and indeed DNA, concluding with the Jungian concepts of *Animus & Anima* and *The Shadow*.

These two volumes (a third is in preparation), cover a vast amount of ground; this is after all an attempt to put some portion of a lifetime's experience and learning to paper. A criticism might be that too much

ground is covered; but *tempus fugit* - what needs to be, must be written. There then arises the question of the readership. For whom is the book written - the psychologist, the homeopath, or those with general interest in soul healing? Setting that question and any criticism aside, these volumes amply demonstrate the complexity of the human psyche, and the limitations of the reductionist thinking that dominates science today (especially in medicine). Dr Lilley will justifiably receive plaudits from the converted, but will the prejudiced be willing to open the covers and stay the course?

Allan Pollock is a retired Chemical Engineer and registered Homeopath. His studies in homeopathy, followed some 38 years as a chartered engineer mostly working for a major multi-national in the petrochemical company.

NOT JUST FOR THERAPY

Gunnel Minett

■ THERAPY IN THE AGE OF NEUROSCIENCE, A GUIDE FOR COUNSELLORS AND THERAPISTS

Peter Afford

Routledge, www.routledge.com, 2020, 272 pp., £20.99, p/b - ISBN 978-1-138-67935-1,

This book has a slightly misleading title, as it describes itself as a guide for counsellors and therapists.

Not to say that it isn't a guide for people who do psychotherapy, but it's also a book that has a lot to offer the general reader interested in understanding the human mind.

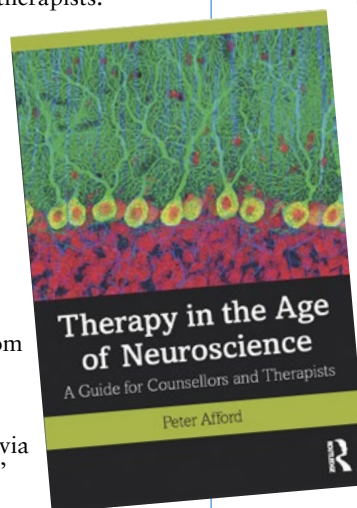
Psychology and psychotherapy have come a long way from Freud. It has been a bit of a journey, through Jung and later Behaviourism, via bible-sized 'manuals' listing a wide range of 'syndromes' and 'disorders' and their cures (mainly designed to comply with the American medical insurance system) to a wider understanding of how the psyche actually works. An understanding that now also includes guidance as to how to experience health and harmony.

There is, however, a lot of stigma and confusion around notions of psychological ill health. A common attitude is that psychological ill health is equivalent to catching a cold or breaking a leg, suggesting that psychological ill health strikes randomly or arises from some inherited malfunction with no links to a person's environment or background. Assumptions that lead to the conclusion that there is something 'wrong' with the person. Alternatively, there's still a tradition of seeing psychological difficulties as due to some shameful inner failing. One consequence of these attitudes is that both by doctors and patients see psychological ill health as best healed by medication and or some other quick fix. And that the 'cure' can only be provided by a (medical) expert who knows how to provide this quick remedy, with the patient as a passive receiver.

This is why this book is such a welcome contribution. It does a brilliant job of clarifying the human psyche from the perspective of someone who knows both about psychological ill health and why psychological ill health occurs. Someone who also has spent twenty years studying cutting-edge neuroscience. Although the book is written in plain and comprehensible language, even for a novice, it is based on cutting-edge neuroscientific research. It draws on theories from such eminent and well known experts as Antonio Damasio (neuroscience), Jaak Panksepp (psychobiology), Louis Cozolino, (psychology) Alan Schore (neuropsychology), Dan Siegel (psychiatry), Sue Gerhardt (psychoanalysis), Ian McGilchrist (psychiatry) well as Carl Jung (analytical psychology). Together the theories presented in the book offer a comprehensive overview of modern neuropsychological research.

Neuroscience is another field that has come a long way. In 2000 Bill Clinton and Tony Blair proudly announced the completion of the Human Genome Project and declared that we

now had all the answers to understanding human behaviour. And since then there have been many further bold announcements regarding specific genes for all sorts of behaviour, down to shoplifting or to finding a suitable life partner. Some of these scientists have even been smart enough to identify their



entrepreneurial gene and turned their findings into money-making enterprises and developed gene-based dating apps (a Tinder for genes) which matches people with suitable genes for a happy future together. Unfortunately, they do not seem to have identified the 'genes' for status, culture and money, that tend to override any gene suitability and lead to break-ups regardless of how well matched the genes are. Or, as Afford explains, genes are potentials. To understand how and why they are expressed in a certain way, and what it means to the individual, requires a far deeper understanding of neuroscience.

The more science reveals about the human body and psyche, the more we come to see that psychological wellbeing has multiple causes. There's a whole variety of functions and processes that are at play. Some are genetic and others come from influences from the environment (epigenetic). To understand these processes, we need to learn to distinguish between the different parts of the brain. There are up-down and left-right influences that play a role. Specific parts of the brain perform certain tasks, and also in cooperation with other brain areas they produce different results. Imbalances in these delicate processes can be, and often are, the cause of psychological ill health.

As the book clarifies, looking at relationships, social engagement, stress, anxiety, depression and trauma from a psychotherapist's perspective is only half the picture. By understanding the underlying biological processes, we get a much clearer and more nuanced picture of psychological ill health. In particular, since so much of psychological healing is about understanding what is happening to us and why: as Afford points out, there are obvious benefits in explaining to his clients how the brain works. It has benefits both as an outlook which avoids the stigma of feeling there's something 'wrong' with me, and as a way to avoid repeating the negative pattern in the future.

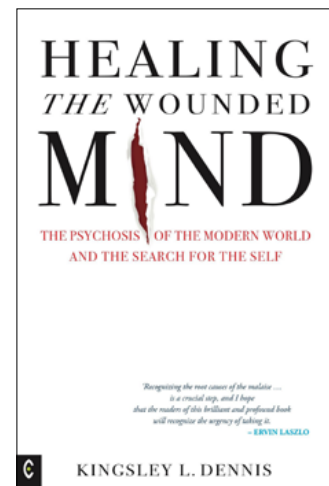
For those working as psychotherapists the book offers an essential and very valuable insight into the human body/mind, which was probably absent from their training. For all others, simply interested in understanding themselves better, the book is equally fascinating, not to say essential reading.

As Afford points out, many of his clients' psychological problems developed in early childhood. Their parents weren't able to give the child

the emotional support needed to learn good affect regulation. Generally, this is because the parent never received sufficient support to develop their own affect regulation. This can be a long and negative chain of events that runs for generations. Not because of some evil side to the human psyche but because of ignorance. As parents we are taught by our parents how to bring up children. We apply the same strategy as our parents used with us. This is particularly the case during our first years. The period before we have explicit memories. This period plays a very significant role. Most parents are not even aware that they are applying a learnt behaviour. Not even those who seek help for their psychological ill health and complain bitterly about their own childhood experiences. And a rather unfortunate aspect of books on psychology is that they tend to deal with how things go wrong. But, as Afford points out, we need to know more about how to get things to go right.

Despite our growing understanding of the human psyche we don't seem to apply this knowledge. On the contrary there are alarming reports of growing psychological ill health among younger generations. It is not just the 'ill health' of our global environment that we leave to the younger generations to deal with. They also need to learn to live in a multicultural environment and cope with all of the problems that this may bring (something with which we are obviously struggling around the world today). Not to mention the growing population and the harsher competition that this brings to all areas of life.

So just as Greta Thunberg is leading the way for bringing awareness to the climate crisis, we need a similar campaign to raise awareness of what it takes to replace psychological ill health with harmony and wellbeing. In terms of keeping our planet together, this is becoming as much of a crisis as the climate threat. Even if it may eventually mean a loss of clients, my hope is to encourage the author to write a follow-up book, focusing how to spread this important knowledge to, above all, parents and anyone who works with children, but also to decision-makers and people with influence in society. If there's going to be any hope of a better future, we simply need to learn what children need to get a good start in life. To work for active prevention rather than cure. And who better to do this than someone who knows about psychological healing and has spent 20 years studying neuroscience.



FROM PARANOIA TO METANOIA

David Lorimer

HEALING THE WOUNDED MIND

Kingsley L. Dennis

Clairview Books, 2019,
170 pp., £12.99, p/b –
ISBN 978-1-912992-04-1

In the 1930s, C.G. Jung was already referring to psychic epidemics in Europe, especially in relation to Nazism and its propaganda. This form of mass manipulation was systematically developed by Freud's nephew Edward Bernays in the 1920s and subsequently applied to advertising to drive the burgeoning consumerist culture, drawing us away from inner reflection to outer distraction and entertainment: you are what you have. According to the author, what he calls the wounded mind constitutes the psychosis of the modern world, which he analyses in the first part of this significant book. As he observes, the spiritual pursuit of meaning has been replaced by the material pursuit of progress that has created an inner void suffused with anxiety that constitutes a form of normalised madness, also anticipated by Erich Fromm, especially in his book *The Fear of Freedom*, which I read many years ago. The author draws on a number of parallels in discussing this psychosis, including the Native American 'wetiko', shamanic predators, the Jungian shadow of the collective unconscious and what Steiner calls 'Ahrimanic forces' advocating a materialistic, mechanical conception of the universe and the human being, nationalism, separatism, fundamentalism and a left hemisphere intellectual culture (p. 35).

For me, one of the most interesting chapters addresses the situation in education where many children are now diagnosed with ADHD and are taking corresponding drugs.

The central issue was identified by H.L. Mencken nearly 100 years ago when he wrote that 'the aim of public education is not to spread enlightenment at all; it is simply to reduce as many individuals as possible to the same safe level, to breed and train a standardised citizenry, to put down dissent and originality.' (p. 53) Other contemporary books actually promoted this form of cultural hypnosis: in *The Principles of Secondary Education* (1918), Alexander Inglis - who ran the secondary school textbook division at Houghton Mifflin - explained that the adaptive function of education fixed habits of obedience to authority, while the integrative function required schoolchildren to conform and the directive function helped determine their social role. According to William Torrey Harris, US Commissioner for Education from 1889 to 1906, the goal of scientific education was the subsumption of the individual, i.e. social control. This entails 'a system that favours standardisation over vision and creativity' so we send children off 'to be conditioned into accepting the dominant narrative and to be instructed to conform' (p. 58). On the other hand, the author defines real education as being about 'integral perspective, contextual awareness and making connections.'

This divorce from the inner dimension is symptomatic of our hyper-modern condition characterised by loss of soul and a sense of metaphysical malaise. If we do not recognise ourselves as fundamentally spiritual beings capable of choosing freedom from within, then we are all the more susceptible to perception control through which those in power are able to manage how we think and therefore regulate our behaviour, as is only too apparent in the current pandemic crisis where competing narratives, for instance on the efficacy of vitamin C treatment, are removed from Facebook and YouTube. As compliant automatons, there is an element of self-fulfilling prophecy in considering ourselves as mere machines to be enhanced and upgraded by advanced microchips; the transhuman can all too easily morph into the inhuman. Through social media, our lives become a spectacle for others and a psychosis of fear is easily spread; however, these same channels enable the dissemination of creative ideas as well, so we need to choose carefully. Tomorrow, for instance, we will be joining the early-morning global meditation along with tens of thousands of other spiritual seekers. It is now time, the author suggests, to seek the genuine self beyond the conditioned social self.

He explains how to go about this in the third part, beginning with the Gnostic vision. He quotes J.G.

Bennett as saying that 'if a new world is to come, we must first create it in ourselves.' (p. 120) He characterises gnosis as spiritual knowledge arrived at intuitively, but here I felt he could have gone more deeply into this insight by explaining the three Gnostic categories of *hylic*, *psychic* and *pneumatic*. The *hylic* individual is materialistic and identifies with the physical body; the *psychic* level is that of the soul where we recognise that we are a part of the whole (also *pistis* as faith) while the *pneumatic* person identifies with the spirit and realises that they *are* the whole. Given this, they can only act for the benefit of the whole, intrinsically uniting ethics with metaphysics.

The later chapters describe the quest for the self, seeking a personal path and the transcendental connection leading to liberation and a new world where the centre is the human heart and soul and we move from the paranoia of fear towards the *metanoia* of love, recognising that culture is in fact an extension of our own collective consciousness and that we are all carriers and transmitters. Hence our essential task is to achieve inner freedom and spiritual rootedness so that we are no longer open to outer manipulation. In this sense, as Jung pointed out in his essay *The Undiscovered Self*, individual inner development is critical in terms of social progress. The author quotes Jung right at the end of his book in answer to the question what can I do: 'Become what you always been, namely the wholeness which we have lost in the midst of a civilised, conscious existence, wholeness which we always were without knowing it.' (p. 164) This means transforming the positions that 'I am what I have' and 'I am what I do' to the more essential 'I am what I am', becoming in the process a human being rather than just a human doing. This book is a timely reflection and guide to the necessary growth of consciousness for a genuine cultural renaissance.

LOOKING AND FEELING

John Kapp

■ BRAINSPOTTING: THE REVOLUTIONARY NEW THERAPY FOR RAPID AND EFFECTIVE CHANGE

Dr David Grand

Sounds True, 2013,
167 pp., \$17.95, -
ISBN 978-1-60407-943-2

The problem with most talking therapies is that they tend to take months or years of sessions for relief

or change to occur. Brainspotting is one of the increasing number of what are known as **brain-based therapies**, which are treatments that use **mindfulness** to go beyond the mind to gain direct access to the brain. It harnesses the brain's natural ability for self scanning, so we can activate, locate and process the sources of trauma and distress in the body, accelerating our ability to heal and cure any mental problems.

The motto of Brainspotting is 'where you look affects how you feel.' The

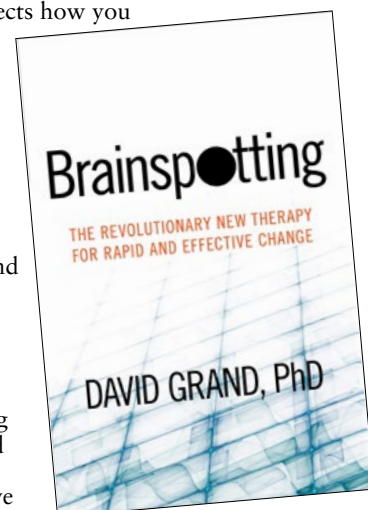
eyes are the window to the soul. Trauma can overwhelm the brain's processing capacity, leaving behind pieces of the trauma, frozen in an unprocessed state. Brainspotting uses our field of vision to find where we are holding these traumas.

Just as the eyes naturally scan the outside environment for information, they can be used to scan the inside environment – our brains – for information.

Brainspotting uses the visual field to turn the 'scanner' back on itself and guide the brain to find lost internal information. By keeping the gaze focussed on a specific external spot, we maintain the brain's focus on the specific internal spot where trauma is stored, in order to promote the deep processing that leads to the trauma's release and resolution. There are no problems except those that we make into problems, but the mind can make a problem out of anything. We can be conditioned (brainwashed) to believe almost anything.

Brainspotting is built on a 'dual attunement' model, where the therapist simultaneously attunes to the client (meaning the relationship between themselves and the client, and mirrors and reveals the client's experience with the primary caregivers in their childhood, especially their mother) and the client's brain processes.

The left side of the brain controls the right side of our body, and the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body. Our left brain thinks, uses language and solves problems. Our right brain is intuitive, emotional



and involved in body functions. When we are overwhelmed with emotion and can't think straight, our right brain has taken over. When we are overly analytical and cut off from our emotions, we are stuck in our left brain. (Men tend to be left-brained half wits, (cold, aloof, unfeeling) and women tend to be right-brained half wits, (hysterical, weepy, can't keep themselves together) Brainspotting helps balance the left and right sides, so that integrate and self-regulate.

Brainspotting developed from Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) in which the client is asked to focus their attention on a disturbing issue, and measure the intensity of pain or emotional distress on the 0-10 'Subjective Units of Disturbance Scale' (SUDS) Thinking about painful subjects is counter-intuitive, and we normally avoid doing this, but the therapist holds the space for the client to maintain this focus, with the object of allowing the brain to process it from implicit to explicit memory, when the SUDS level decreases. When this is reported as 0, the issue is no longer distressing, and we may then 'squeeze the lemon', by provoking the client to think again about the issue, to check the activation, and see whether it is really healed, until the client reports that they are cured.

The most impressive statistic about Brainspotting is an evaluation dated 2016 of the 20 trauma therapies given to those affected by the Sandy Hook school shootings in Connecticut USA in 2012. Brainspotting was voted the most effective intervention, and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) was almost the least effective. www.brainspotting.org. I believe that Brainspotting would help those traumatised by disasters (like the Grenfell tower fire in June 2017, who received little or no psychological support). I believe that it deserves to be clinically trialled, so that it could be recommended by NICE for use in the NHS, and I am willing to help organise a trial.

I first heard about Brainspotting when I attended a taster session in June 2018. I was intrigued sufficiently to do Part 1 of the training (3 days in Nov 2018) and went on to complete Part 2 in Feb and part 3 in April 2019, totalling 9 days over 6 months. As client during that time, I experienced 14 brainspotting sessions of up to 1 hour each, which were all different, and all successful in clearing up 14 different issues. I have used the technique on 10 clients to date, and all reported satisfactory outcomes, I offer it every week on Sundays from 10-1pm at Essence, 86, Church Rd Hove BN3 2EB

(opposite Hove town hall) as drop in classes with facilitator training for donations. Every Sunday afternoon, 2-5, I offer family constellation group therapy on the same basis. I also run the CAmpaign for Social Prescribing of Talking Therapies (CASPOTT) see www.caspott.org.uk and www.sectco.org.uk, and papers on section 9 of www.reginaldkapp.org. I can be contacted on johnkapp@btinternet.com, and 01273 417997.

PHILOSOPHY- SPIRITUALITY

OUR FUTURE IN THE BALANCE

David Lorimer

■ IMMODERATE GREATNESS

William Ophuls

CreateSpace, 2012, 106 pp., £9,
p/b – ISBN 978-1-47924-314-3

■ APOLOGIES TO THE GRANDCHILDREN

William Ophuls

CreateSpace, 2017,
139 pp., £5.50, p/b –
ISBN 978-1-73088-725-3

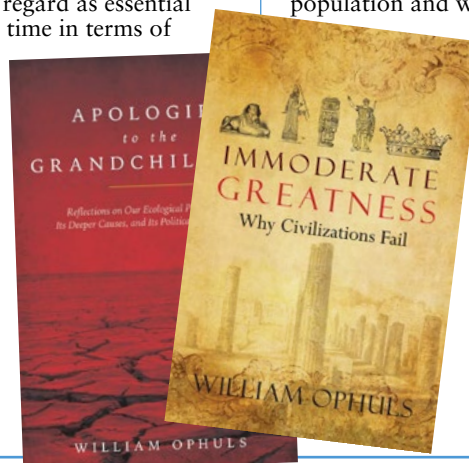
Until I read and reviewed Andrew Fellows' *Gaia, Psyche and Deep Ecology*, I had not heard of the work of William Ophuls, which also features prominently in John Reed's book reviewed below. So I ordered these books on Amazon and read them with huge profit over the weekend. William Ophuls was born in 1934 and spent a number of years in the US foreign service before receiving a PhD in political science from Yale in 1973. His first book as an independent scholar came out in 1977 – *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity*, followed by *Requiem for Modern Politics* in 1997 and *Plato's Revenge: Politics in the Age of Ecology* in 2011. Themes from these earlier books are taken up and developed in these more recent books, which I regard as essential reading for our time in terms of understanding the trajectory of our globalised civilisation that is on a collision course with nature's inherent ecological limits. Interestingly, many of Ophuls' ideas

parallel the eco-philosophy of Henryk Skolimowski - he uses the same terms sane, humane and ecological, but Henryk's work is not cited, nor does it appear in the bibliography.

The wider analytical background goes back at least to the work of Edward Gibbon in the late 18th century on the decline and fall of the Roman Empire; the term 'immoderate greatness' is derived from Gibbon and exemplifies the process of Hubris and Nemesis characteristic of Greek tragedy where 'those afflicted by hubris become the agents of their own destruction. Like a tragic hero, a civilisation comes to ruinous end due to intrinsic flaws that are the shadow side of its very virtues. (IG, p. 2) In the second book, the author likens civilisation to a long-running Ponzi scheme that robs nature and borrows from the future, expanding and exploiting to the limit then subsequently imploding. In the first book, he examines the key elements of biophysical limits in terms of ecological exhaustion, exponential growth, expedited entropy and excessive complexity; then the human components of moral decay and practical failure. In this context, the important work of previous scholars with whom I am familiar is cited, in particular Oswald Spengler (*The Decline of the West*), Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History* and *The Crisis of our Age*, based on a multivolume work by Pitirim Sorokin. More recently, one could also have added Fritjof Capra's *The Turning Point*, and the author draws on a number of writers with whom I am not familiar.

Ophuls brilliantly demonstrates the inexorability of the overall process paralleled in previous civilisations but globalised in our own and underpinned by an ideology of economic growth based on aspirations to knowledge, mastery, power and wealth devoid of intrinsic morality and implemented through instrumental rationality. The city is necessarily a parasite on its surroundings whereby increased population and wealth leads to a rise

in demand and consumption, resulting in an overexploitation of natural resources and eventually in ecological exhaustion (the Europeans first globalised this process in the history of colonialism). The dynamics of exponential



growth entail a doubling slightly larger than the sum of all previous growth where technology can only postpone rather than remove the day of reckoning. Due to the present orientation of the human brain, the future is neglected and discounted at virtually zero, despite the pioneering work of economist Lord Stern. This has parallels with our cultural attitude towards death – we know it will happen but not when, so we continue to live our lives on a business as usual footing.

This growth trend leads to expedited entropy where nature effectively exacts a tax on human activity, partly in terms of diminishing returns and rising costs. This process is exacerbated by the development of excessive complexity and overload leading to an unmanageable situation that is inappropriately tackled by attempting to exert control through tax and regulation. Unfortunately, in complex systems ‘an actor controls almost nothing, yet influences almost everything’ (IG p. 37) This makes systemic failure inevitable in the long run. The author points out that such complexity as the essence of civilisation ‘is utterly dependent on a continuous input of physical, intellectual and moral energy without which it simply cannot be sustained.’ (IG, p. 41) and the human challenge is that managing the system requires prudence – ‘the exercise of judgement, caution, forethought and self-restraint’, which is exactly what we collectively lack and therefore fail to implement.

If the premise – also articulated by Machiavelli and Voltaire – that human nature is essentially the same through history, then, as Gibbon puts it, prosperity ripens the principle of decay while the causes of destruction multiply with the extent of conquest. The initial moral core and guiding ideals of a civilisation are corrupted through commerce and affluence along with a focus on individual and vested interests at the cost of the common good and the maintenance of civil society. This leads to practical failure whereby the elite attempt to maintain their ‘advantageous present’ based on systemic inequality and corruption of political processes, as one sees so transparently in the US. ‘Ecological problems, exponential pressures, thermodynamic losses, risky complexity, moral decay, and human incapacity are evident everywhere, differing only in extent and degree’ (IG, p. 66) – collectively, we are on the Titanic heading for the iceberg, where the proverbial rearranging of deckchairs rather than a fundamental re-orientation is totally inadequate, yet we cannot bring ourselves to take the necessary action,

as Greta Thunberg has repeatedly stressed.

It is not as if we are short of warnings on the implications of ecological overshoot and collapse – Rachel Carson in 1962 (we use four times more pesticides than then), The Club of Rome 1972, 1992 and 2004, EF Schumacher 1973, the UN environment conferences since 1992, IPCC 1990, and the world scientists’ warnings of 1992 and 2017 calling for 13 unpalatable actions in order to reverse ecological damage (and one could add the work of Lester Brown on eco-economy). Owing to our collective procrastination and delay, the urgency and magnitude of the actions required has increased – yet, irrationally, we persist in business as usual, indeed ‘so far from trying to solve our problems, we persist in behaviour that makes them worse.’

Apologies to the Grandchildren reflects further on our ecological predicament, its deeper causes and, crucially, its political consequences. Six chapters are devoted to the demise of liberal democracy with its delicate balance of conservative emphasis on order and stability with liberal aspirations to freedom. However, we are now witnessing an unravelling of the social order and civil society both with a regression into tribalism and with an overemphasis on the left concerning freedom for minority identity groups rather than looking after the interests of ordinary people – *item*, the 2019 UK election result and the probable Presidential result in 2020 in the US. Ophuls identifies an additional factor as the decay of the patrician class where ‘*noblesse oblige*’ in contrast to the typical meritocracy where entitlement does not entail responsibility. The author sees the crisis of collapse as signalling the advent of chaos and therefore the rise of tyranny – people will choose security over freedom when things get bad, as we have seen with the tactical introduction of the Patriot Act after 9/11, to give one small example.

The loss of trust in the political process as well as the distortion of reason and the decay of truth are symptomatic of a general crisis of governance and legitimacy (and application of Gresham’s law is that bad information drives out the good). Effective governance requires what Hobbes called a ‘Sovereign’ and Rousseau the prevalence of the disinterested general will as an ordering principle for civil society. This means that we need an overall moral vision of the future based on the common good rather than sectional or national interests; this in turn entails a supra-governmental authority with respect to

environmental security, as I discussed in my review of Nicholas Hagger’s recent books on a potential world constitution in Issue 130. Such bodies have been systematically undermined up until now, particularly by the US.

In both books, Ophuls repeatedly calls for a *metanoia*, as indicated in my review of John Reed’s book below. However, this is completely impossible and totally impractical from a political point of view within our system. We only ‘gesture at solutions’ when leading scientists tell us that we need a ‘transformation based on a fundamental reorientation of human values, equity, behaviour, institutions, economies and technologies.’ (AG, p. 106) Given our shadow side, natural limits and recurrent flaws in human nature, the author does not think that technology will get us out of this impasse; indeed, he thinks it likely that a technotopia would result in a mechanistic and tyrannical dystopia, as we are already seeing with surveillance totalitarianism in China, a development that will become potentially pervasive with the installation of 5G. So he anticipates a return to a more localised system, which is already in evidence in the green and transition movement. One big question, however, is whether we can in fact replace fossil fuel energy not only with necessarily intermittent renewables, but with some form of ecologically benign form of energy, as envisaged by Nikola Tesla but suppressed by commercial interests a hundred years ago.

Like John Reed, Ophuls is concerned by the spiritual devastation entailed by our loss of a connection to the infinite in terms of disorientation and lack of meaning. We require ‘a profound transformation of consciousness that abjures self-destructiveness and selfishness, manifests a will to live in harmony with nature, and aspires to some higher values than worldly wealth and bodily comfort.’ (AG, p. 21) He notes that we live in a civilisation that produces goods in abundance but not the Good, and he advocates a life of spiritual abundance and material simplicity. However, as also noted in the previous review and by Chris Bache in his book reviewed in the last issue, the suffering entailed by overshoot, chaos and collapse is ‘a necessary crucible for the forging of a new era, for the making of a new collective soul.’ (AG, pp. 101-2) There is an evolutionary prospect of a greater consciousness in the long term, but the short term outlook is precarious and our ability to take the necessary collective transformative action seems to be fatally compromised. One more hopeful line

of analysis missing from the book is the rising influence of women and the feminine principle, with writers like Riane Eisler, Scilla Elworthy, Mary Midgley, Naomi Klein and Anne Baring, the first articulating a partnership rather than the current inherently exploitative model based on domination. In the meantime, the creative minority including readers of this review should do everything in their power to raise awareness and promote a smoother transition to a fundamentally new world characterised by the Bulgarian sage Beinsa Douno (Peter Deunov) as a future Culture of Love.

EVOLVING BEING

David Lorimer

■ TIME IS RUNNING OUT

John Reed

Umbria Books, 2020,
163 pp., £9.99, p/b –
ISBN 978-1-910074-28-2

In a late essay, Dr Albert Schweitzer wrote that 'technical progress and extension of knowledge do indeed represent progress, but not in fundamentals. The essential thing is that we become more finely and deeply human.' The author of this penetrating study of the modern world and psyche would doubtless agree with this sentiment and, given his emphasis on what he calls 'being' and his contention that the outer world is ultimately an expression of the inner - something we all too easily forget and neglect. The book is a passionately argued case for the necessity of taking the next step in evolution beyond the ego so clearly reflected in the structures and motivations of global capitalism, and in particular of the American ethos. The author points out that the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness makes no mention of equality and solidarity, and that the American dream is based on self-interest, opportunism and individualism expressed in commercial ventures and consumerism. For John, this materialistic concept has 'no underlying moral substance whatsoever' and discounts the essential message relayed by sages that we need to transcend the separative ego to discover our real identity as one being. Just today I read this quote from Nisargadatta Maharaj: 'The consciousness in me, the consciousness in you, apparently two, really one, seek unity and that is love.'

John argues that it is a deluded notion 'that satisfying the needs of the ego is the meaning and purpose

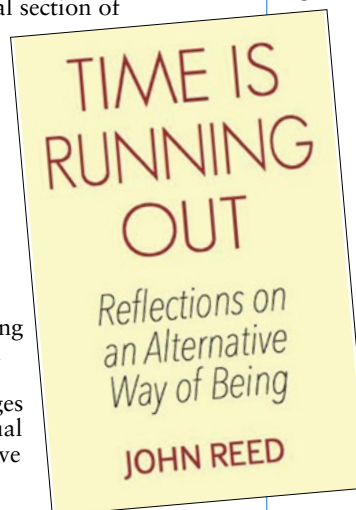
of life' (p. 104) and yet this is exactly the implication of the globalised neoliberal order so dominant since the 1980s. There is also a huge ecological cost to the planet as well as a psychological cost to ourselves in terms of mental distress and rising rates of suicide, especially among the young. This amounts to a massive loss of soul which, when exported around the world, acts as a 'cultural weapon of mass destruction.' In reflecting on lessons that we can learn from Ladakh and the account given by Helena Norberg Hodge in her landmark *Ancient Futures*, John quotes the journalist William Pfaff to the effect that 'our progress is your destabilisation, the destruction of your cultures, the creation of millions of culturally alienated, dislocated, displaced persons, ripped from the own past to become integrated into a radically materialistic ethic.' (p. 73) I witnessed this first hand last September when going round the anthropological section of the British Columbia Museum where the destruction of indigenous cultures and languages was spelled out in no uncertain terms.

By disconnecting ourselves from the perennial teaching of sages and our spiritual essence, we have created a deep identity crisis characterised by loss of connection, as the atheist Johann Hari also points out, while missing the connection to our central being. John describes this in terms of the (spiritual) vertical continuum of depth and wisdom and the complementary (material) horizontal continuum of width and breadth where all the technological emphasis is on extending the second while disregarding the first. I agree with him when he writes that at this critical juncture 'there is a far more urgent need to move up the vertical continuum of depth and wisdom than along an already overextended horizontal one of human "intelligence".' Other writers like Iain McGilchrist have been conveying the same message of imbalance, but in different terms.

The election of Donald Trump as President of the United States provides a telling outer indicator of the inner state of the US electorate and culture, representing

as he does the realisation of the 'American dream' outlined above but not reflected for the majority of the population in a country that prioritises military expenditure and global supremacy over the welfare of its own people. The state of US education is such that 130 million people are to some degree functionally illiterate. The system as a whole, as also in the UK, is centrally devoted to 'wealth creating' concerns at the expense of the necessary 'refinement of the spirit' which is the essential object of education in the arts. Without cultured people, culture itself perishes, utility triumphs over beauty, and the civilisation itself goes into decline. Arguably, the recent emphasis on character education is a step in the direction of being, although without using that term explicitly. John tellingly quotes a French philosopher on the decline of Rome, where he speaks of the 'gradual absorption of the educated classes by the masses and the consequent simplification of all functions of political, social, economic and intellectual life, which we call the barbarisation of the ancient world.' (p. 66) What we are now witnessing is a corrosive form of technological barbarisation.

In considering the prospects for a turnaround towards a less egotistical culture and a corresponding steady-state economy, John comments that the preconditions are not in fact in place, except in small community microcosms like Tamera and Findhorn. He draws on the work of William Ophuls in *Immoderate Greatness - Why Civilisations Fail*, also featured in the book by Andrew Fellows reviewed in the last issue. The key factors are biological exhaustion, entropy, excessive complexity and moral decay. Our economic system converts ecological wealth into economic benefit until inevitable limits are reached and a final stage where 'frivolity, hedonism, cynicism, pessimism, narcissism, consumerism and materialism suffuse the people. Politics is increasingly corrupt; life increasingly unjust.' In an exchange with the author, John debates the prospect for the necessary consciousness revolution to take place. Ophuls feels that there are insufficient numbers, even if 'we will ultimately conform our way of life to ecological and spiritual reality' (p. 156). So they agree – as I do – on short-term pessimism and long-term optimism, but, almost certainly not without a necessary systemic



breakdown on the way. However, this does not excuse us as individuals from working towards this necessary spiritual revolution in our own lives and spheres of influence, aligning our inner compasses with love and wisdom. Moreover, it is not simply a question of numbers, as David Hawkins points out in his work: spiritual power is ultimately far more potent than material force and violence. We need to begin to take this power much more seriously and help others to tap into it if we want to have a chance of co-creating a new world.

A CONTEMPORARY Gnostic Christianity

Nicholas Colloff

■ A THEOLOGY OF LOVE: REIMAGINING CHRISTIANITY THROUGH A COURSE IN MIRACLES: A SPIRITUALITY BASED ON LOVE, NOT FEAR

Richard Smoley

Inner Traditions, 2019, 229 pp., \$18.99 - ISBN 978-1-62055-925-3

In 1944, C.G. Jung had what would now be characterised as a near death experience and like many recipients of this experience found returning to the body challenging and was only 'persuaded' to do so by the sense that there was unfinished work for him to do. He experienced the subsequent return as a case of a felt imprisonment. This sense that the everyday world we inhabit is seriously out of step with a deeper underlying and freeing reality is a common one. It is one of the key drivers of 'religion'. I, we are not as we are meant to be. The world, as currently perceived, is, at best, awry, at worst, an imprisoning entrapment.

Is this simply a misplaced uncertainty? One that should be dispelled from our minds with a healthy, materialist reminder that this is the only world that there is, or could possibly be. Purposefully enjoy it until the end comes, and all is finished. Learn to love your transiency!

Yet, as Richard Smoley notes, in this erudite, well-constructed and thoughtful book: why would we be subject to such a persistent (and culturally creative) desire if it did not point to a reality that might genuinely satisfy it (rather than simply label it as false). This desire, deepened by the experienced reality of other worlds, phenomenologically robust in their countless instances, as they are differing in their interpretation, needs

to find suitable framings so that it might be navigated purposively to a meaningful fulfilment.

This is the presumed task of religion; and, in the 'West', this task has primarily been carried by Christianity but for Smoley this carries significant obstacles. Mainstream Christianity appears not only to be in a slow, winding decline, its institutions compromised and emptying (at least in North America and Europe) but, it has always, Smoley thinks, asked one to believe multiple impossible things, the resulting cognitive dissonance papered over by fear and negative senses of belonging.

The core perplexity for Smoley in mainstream Christianity is the doctrine of the atonement – simply put how salvation gets done – there are multiple versions of this, emergent in Christian history, but a highly influential one is the substitutionary or vicarious theory. Over boldly put, God, who is loving and all wise, has because of humanity's fall developed a surfeit of wrath directed at humanity's failure, nothing that humanity could do can assuage this wrath, so God sends His Son, as a sacrifice that will repay humanity's debts, a repayment that must be paid in blood, His death on the Cross. This is clearly articulated within a context where animal sacrifice is a cultural reality yet carried over into a resultant culture where it is not. That I recognise that this debt has been paid and that I have faith in Jesus as the only sole necessary and sufficient payer is my entrance ticket that yields salvation. No other path is available.

Smoley finds this neither intellectually coherent nor emotionally satisfying for, at heart, it has its roots in fear – a wrathful deity, an obsequious son, necessary violence and believers corralled by fear rather than by any ennobling, inclusive, loving invitation.

So, we need to create an alternative framing one that adequately describes and articulates the nature of our 'thrownness' into this world; and, offers a more intellectually credible and emotionally fulfilling pathway to our redemption.

Smoley sets out to do just this in a closely argued text that draws on commonly held features of everyday life, patterns of religious experience; Biblical scholarship, philosophical argumentation; and, two key resources namely insights from the Kabbalah and the Course in Miracles.

In this latter case, the Kabbalah is primarily used to articulate why the reality we normally inhabit is as it is – a five-dimensional box of ten key components – spatial (front, back etc.), temporal and positional in relation to what we move towards (good) and away from (evil). But, that this reality, is one, the lowest one, of a nested hierarchy of realities that lead back to their divine source. That divine source can be solely good but this, everyday reality, must be an admixture – our five dimensional box is a place of separation and that implies a differentiation and admixture between good or bad contexts.

This reality is then mapped onto a similarly resonant, though not identical, scheme in The Course of Miracles; and, it is the Course that not only describes these layers of reality but provides a pathway of liberation from separation to a renewed unity.

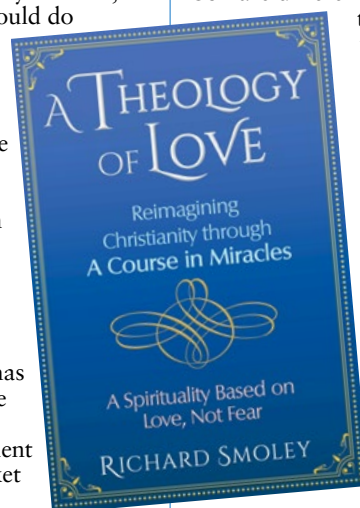
In the Course, the Father and the Son are differentiated only in that

the Son can entertain the possibility of separation from the Father. This momentary imagination gives rise to the Ego, that the Son chooses to believe in, the Ego gives rise to the world that we daily experience, including our bodies that 'contain' that experience. We live suspended in the Ego's resilient fantasy of separation – a

world of good and evil –

that it, not God, has created. If one recognises in this a contemporary expression of Gnosticism, you would be wholly right; and, what Smoley does, in a careful exploration of the underlying metaphysics of the Course, is make a resonant case for why we should take it seriously as both credible and attractive. He, also, notes supportively how Gnosticism has thoroughly penetrated contemporary culture whether it be in the novels of Philip K. Dick or in films like the Matrix. It is seriously in the air once more.

Credibility would require more space than I have available to fully demonstrate but suffice to say the book makes compelling connections between what any ordinary person might consider their experience to be, how 'extraordinary' experience can be mapped effectively in relation to



this; and, how both the Kabbalah and the Course emerge as robust 'tools for the head' to help one think through this expansion in our perspective; how they help tease us out of the 'box'. All offered not as a dogmatic system but as an experiment after knowing to try out and see. Ironically, the only touches of 'dogma' come at the sometimes too narrow, slightly grumpy characterisations of the mainstream Church whose blending of good and evil is probably more nuanced than is allowed here.

But, in the meantime, three thoughts on attractiveness.

First, because it is a picturing of reality that is ultimately inclusive – the illusion comes to an end – we are reunited within our commonly held, unifying reality, nobody is excluded, let alone punished. Jesus, the man from Nazareth, in the Course's view, is the first person to fully recognize the full nature of our situation and goes to his death not as a substitution for sin but as a demonstration that death too is simply an illusion. His death is exemplary, that requires no imitation because its reality is rooted in the fact of the Resurrection where we are enabled to 'see through' death.

Second, because the pathway to this Atonement (and one of the features of the Course is that it uses Christian language in uniquely innovative, and coherent within its own logic, ways) is through the continual practice of forgiveness, a forgiveness not born out of either condescension or pity (or subtle manipulation) but from bringing to birth a continuing recognition of our underlying unity. Everyone I harm or who I am harmed by is fundamentally myself. Harm is a condition of separation, is only possible because we entertain this illusion of separation. True forgiveness is the continuing attention to our connectivity, our being enfolded one in another.

Third, because it is resolutely practical. The Course is primarily a work book of 365 daily meditations and exercises (with supporting commentary and materials). Diligently followed, it is meant to work, to transform one's life in a way that makes forgiveness and love possible. It is a practice that is both gentle and yet wholly tough minded. As with forgiveness, so with love, many of the forms in which it appears to us in the realm of Ego are precisely that, exercises in Ego – what the course calls 'special love', as distinct from 'holy love' predominates – for when we examine our motives how many of them do we find to be self-driven, self-protective, self-interested? Mostly answers the Course robustly, maybe Smoley suggests, a little too dispiritingly so!

This perhaps leads to a consideration of what is less attractive about the Course – that like previous 'Gnostic' perspectives though the route may be open to all in theory, in practice, its demands a certain austerity. This may be as with the Course, a psychological one or, as on other occasions, ascetic or intellectual ones such that it becomes a path so daunting as to be for the few! Though, perhaps, this is offset in the Course's case with a sense of the spaciousness of 'time' – since the only downside is the illusion that we already know, we will find the opportunity to apply ourselves to liberation in due course!

The book ends with chapters that consider what this perspective might mean for the practice of Christianity more broadly – what practices and perspectives may persist and which might be usefully put aside – and with a helpful 'summa' that recapitulates the Course's theology or framing that can only be a helpful hermeneutical key to engaging with the text itself.

At the end of my first reading of the book, I did want to want to set it down, only partially tongue in cheek, with a satisfying hurrah of 'Valentinus rides again'! Valentinus having been the most successful and purportedly eloquent of early Gnostic writers.

Whether you are convinced or not, it is one of those books that wholly deserves to be seriously wrestled with to assure yourself as to why or why not? It, also, deserves to prompt more serious Christian theological reflection on the Course in Miracles itself (though on the likelihood of that, I expect I am as pessimistic as the author)!

THE COSMIC LITURGY

Peter Reason

■ THOMAS BERRY: A BIOGRAPHY

Tucker, Mary Evelyn, John Grim,
and Andrew Angyal

Columbia University Press,
2019, 360 pp., £25, h/b
– ISBN 978-0-23117-698-9

Thomas Berry was one of the great ecological teachers of our time, one who linked contemporary concerns for ecological devastation with the deep human urge to connect with

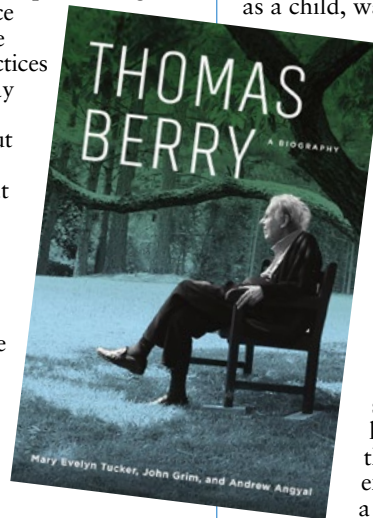
the cosmos. His books include *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Great Work*, and, in collaboration with cosmologist Brian Swimme, *The Universe Story*. These, along with his lectures, films and teaching, and his extensive collaborations, brought his ideas to a wide public both within religious traditions and beyond.

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim worked closely with Thomas Berry for over thirty years as his students, editors and literary executors; they have collaborated with Andrew Angyal, Emeritus Professor of English and author of several biographies, to give us this account of his life.

In *The Great Work*, Berry told how, as a child, wandering from his house, he came across a meadow 'covered with white lilies rising above the grass'. In this magic moment he realized: 'whatever preserves and enhances this meadow in its natural cycles of transformation is good; whatever opposes this meadow or negates it is not good'.

The biography shows how this early learning deepened through his religious experience. Drawn to a contemplative life, he joined the Passionist order. As a monk he participated for years in the Divine Office, the daily cycle of prayer that follows the cosmological sequence of the day between darkness and light; and the cycle of the year that marks the transition from Christmas/solstice to Easter/springtime. Berry saw that this ritual cycle represented 'the age-old effort of humans to bring human life into accord with the great liturgy of the universe'. Drawing on these foundational experiences he articulated the 'great work', the task of 'moving modern industrial civilization from its present devastating influence on Earth to a more benign mode of presence'.

These experiences were illuminated by three main teachings, derived from Teilhard de Chardin: that the universe from its beginnings has a psychico-spiritual as well as a physical-material dimension; that the human story and the universe story are a single story; and that western religious traditions need to move from an almost exclusive concern for redemption to an emphasis on creation. Later, in *The Dream of the Earth* he wrote of 'the great spiralling galaxies... and this privileged planet Earth!'; of humans



as 'the most recent wonder of the universe, a special mode of reflecting on this larger curvature of the universe itself'.

Berry struggled to find a way to develop and teach these insights: we learn of his studies of cultural history, his experiences in the army and in China, his vocational crisis as a monk; how he widened his studies from Western and Christian traditions to include Asian and indigenous perspectives; how, eventually, in 1970 he founded the Riverdale Centre for Religious Research in a Victorian house in the Bronx with view across the Hudson River. Riverdale was devoted to reflection on evolutionary history: 'human, biological, geological, and cosmological'. Here, Thomas held seminars and discussion with teachers and students from many walks of life and academic disciplines. The account of life at Riverdale is of a lively community of inquiry, focussed around a broad theme but with space for individuals to pursue their own directions.

It was from Riverdale that the 'new story' emerged in collaboration with cosmologist Brian Swimme. The cosmological stories told by all religions arise not abstractly but from 'intimate human interactions and the Earth systems. They can give humans a sense of belonging and purpose, providing reflections on such basic questions as: Where do I come from?' Thomas saw that modern humans are troubled because we no longer have a good story, that we are between stories. The new story united science and humanities in an account of the evolution of the Universe from 'the great flaring forth' to humanity's evolving place in the cosmos. It moved from human-centred to Earth-centred, offering a story that places the human in the context of Earth.

Berry's teaching evolved from his understanding of 'the interior presence... the livingness of things' in the context of evolutionary time. In many ways, his perspective was close to 'panpsychic' philosophy, the metaphysical view that the cosmos is a coherent field of mind/matter; that all things, including the Earth itself, are integral to the fabric of the living, sentient cosmos, philosopher Freya Mathews puts it. But he never used the term 'panpsychic'. Mary Evelyn Tucker, in personal correspondence, suggests that this was in part because he liked to coin his own terms: asserting, for example, that Earth is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects. Further,

he was building on the cosmic evolutionary perspective of Teilhard de Chardin, rather than any philosophical panpsychic tradition, Whiteheadian or Spinozan. This unfortunately means that his work has been somewhat overlooked in contemporary debates on panpsychism.

This biography gives those influenced by Berry's teaching invaluable insights into how his perspective evolved and the quality of his presence as a spiritual and ecological teacher. The later chapters on Time, Teilhard de Chardin, Confucian perspectives and Indigenous traditions move away from the strictly biographical and draw together some of the continuing threads and influences that ran through his life.

The book closes with an assertion of the deep confidence in the future that Thomas Berry bequeathed: we can all learn, through mutual presencing with the Earth community, to become 'cosmic persons' - although this is the achievement of a lifetime. He was confident in the evolutionary processes and the continuing revelation that can align 'human imagination and ingenuity with the creativity of the universe and the Earth' leading to a new Ecozoic Age.

This biography beautifully shows us the unfolding life of a great religious, philosophical and ecological teacher, one who was also - as I know from direct experience - immensely kind, humorous and generous. We are told that, as he approached his death at the age of ninety-four he remarked, 'I will be in the universe where I always have been'.

*Peter Reason's most recent publication (with artist Sarah Gillespie) is **On Presence: Essays | Drawings** <http://peterreason.net/OnPresence.html>.*

THE RETURN OF THE SACRED FEMININE

David Lorimer

■ WHEN GOD HAD A WIFE

Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince
Bear and Co, 2019, 326 pp., \$16,
p/b - ISBN 978-1-59143-370-5

This latest book follows up the authors' previous scholarly historical

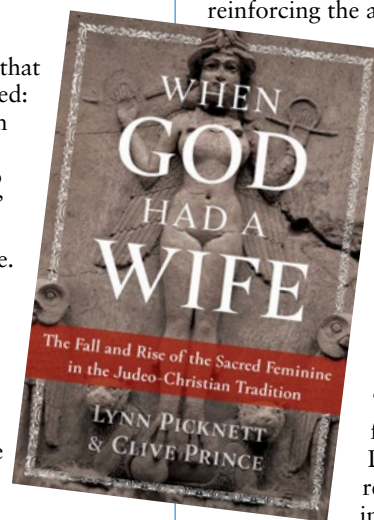
work to examine how the authorities in both Judaism and Christianity rewrote history 'to erase the feminine side of faith, deliberately ignoring Jesus's real message and again condemning women to marginalisation.' It breaks new ground in showing how goddess worship was present in early Judaism, while continuing the revolutionary work instigated by the discovery of the Nag Hammadi Gnostic gospels in 1945, which have given a very different picture of Jesus as a messenger of wisdom - as indicated in my review in the previous issue of books about Mary Magdalene.

The narrative highlights early on the political importance of religious orthodoxy in legitimising and reinforcing the authority of the

King ruling on behalf of a single God. The cult of Yahweh 'was increasingly identified with centralised royal power' entailing the removal of other gods such as Baal and the merging of El with Yahweh. This picture in fact represents the Deuteronomist rewriting of the Bible in the seventh century and airbrushing out

the figures such as Asherah, originally a Canaanite goddess and the consort of Baal. Many artefacts testify to her worship alongside Yahweh as the great mother and sacred tree as a symbol of fertility. An eighth century inscription refers to 'Yahweh and his Asherah.' It is remarkable to read that the statue of Asherah was present in Solomon's Temple for 236 of the 370 years of its existence. The existence of a goddess implies the office of priestess, which in all probability also involved ritual sexuality and the *hieros gamos* or sacred union.

A later development is the emergence of Sophia as wisdom, which is more of a symbol - 'the old Testament version of the Blessed Virgin Mary - than a 'full-blooded female archetype' also embodying the erotic. Then we come to the Hellenisation process in Alexandria, also incorporating Isis. Interestingly, Philo identifies Sophia with Logos, thus conferring enormous power, but in the Gospel



of John we find the Logos associated with Jesus. Interestingly, Ben Sira and the Wisdom of Solomon both equate God's Holy Spirit with Sophia while the indwelling presence of God is represented by Shekhina. We now move on into the New Testament where there is a fascinating discussion of the parallels between Simon Magus and his consort Helen with Jesus and Mary Magdalene. It turns out that it is precisely on account of these similarities that Simon is demonised as the origin of all heresies. Ironically, this is all documented by Hippolytus in his book *The Great Revelation* and later by Justin. These theologians naturally interpreted Simon's wonder-working as that of the devil, while identical actions by Jesus were divinely inspired. At issue is the crucial question of authority: people could not be left free to choose, and the very word for heretic is derived from *haerein* meaning to choose.

The authors propose that both Simon and Jesus were trying to reintroduce the goddess element, and a very different picture of Mary Magdalene emerges from the Gnostic Gospels, especially those of Thomas, Philip and Mary; and in the source gospel for the Synoptics, Q, Jesus attributes his teachings to Wisdom/Sophia, which is also the case in the Gospel of the Beloved Companion, where the Holy Spirit is explicitly feminine, as it apparently was for early Christians. These Gospels portray Mary rather than Peter as the true successor of Jesus as the one who fully understood and embodied his message and who, even in the canonical gospels, anoints Jesus as Christ. Significantly, the anointing is performed by a woman whose role was subsequently distorted, and especially by Pope Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century. Instead, Gnostic Gospels understand Mary's position as a priestess and the consort of Jesus. In the Valentinian Gospel of Philip, Jesus is the bridegroom and Mary as Sophia the bride who together enter into the bridal chamber.

A contributory factor to the editing out of Mary might have been her similarity to Helen as well as the subsequent equating of virginity and celibacy with spiritual perfection. The authors rightly observe that 'the great calamity of the last 2000 years is that the goddess's fate in Judaism was repeated in Christianity' (p. 270) - hence our current spiritually incomplete faith but also the

revival of the sacred feminine that is underway. The emergence of the church as a patriarchal authoritarian and political institution in the fourth century played a critical role, but the orthodox view of Jesus has in my view been overturned by the Gnostic Gospels, from which a new and more balanced picture emerges. I believe that we are now ready as a culture for a fully fledged sacred feminine that embraces all of its aspects. This book is an important contribution to this process.

MULTI-COINCIDENCE

Peter Hardwick

■ SHROUDED TRUTH – BIBLICAL REVELATIONS THROUGH PAST LIFE JOURNEYS

Reena Kumarasingham

From the Heart Press, 2018,
392pp., £13.79, p/b – ISBN
978-0-95678-875-0

Reena, of Asian Hindu background is a therapist whose practice, *Divine Aspect*, has clients spanning Asia, Australia and Europe. She is a trainer for the *Past Life Regression Academy* and trains therapists in all these regions. This reviewer is a Past Life Regression Therapist and familiar with arguments both accepting and rejecting the 'reality' and origin of past lives. I therefore consider the past lives described in Reena's book will particularly raise these questions due to their Christian historical setting.

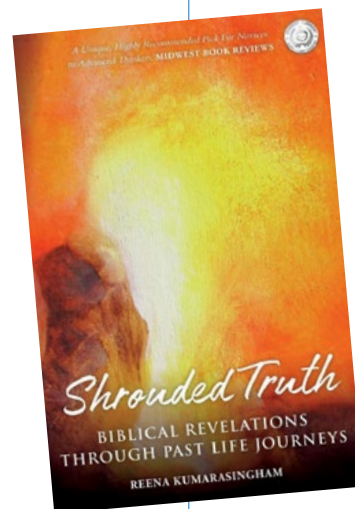
Over a period of four years in Europe, Asia and Australia, Reena regressed eight clients who all had past lives while Christ was alive, with seven who either knew him or saw him. Their experiences are transcribed in this book. They are James the brother of Jesus, St Paul, Mary Magdalene and her sister Martha and daughter Tamar, the Apostle Thomas, David the son of John the Baptist, and a woman named Mimi.

Many events they describe are not recorded in any other historical

accounts. Mary Magdalene describes her marriage to Jesus and their three children. The accounts that will be most strongly questioned are the version of events at the crucifixion that differ from those in the New Testament.

In prison while awaiting crucifixion Jesus was severely beaten. Using bribery, the severely weakened Jesus was secretly taken from prison. An ardent follower of Jesus, out of love for him, agreed to be substituted in prison, where he was also severely beaten. With bribery of the Roman soldier guards at his crucifixion, the substitute, expected to be still alive, was brought down from the cross. He was then taken away for burial. Not all the witnesses to the crucifixion knew about the substitute or whether he was dead when he was brought down, so there are slight differences in their observations.

After a long recovery Jesus is taken by Mary Magdalene and others to France, where for security they conceal their true identities. Although unable to reveal his background Jesus continued teaching. Apart from his visits to Greece and Egypt they remain there until they die. Mary describes his death in detail.



Appendix 1 gives an account of the past life regression process. Appendix 2 discusses the consistency of the accounts given, highlighting that none of the clients had ever met. In considering the validity of the sessions Reena points out that when collecting information for a book like this it is vital to understand the reasons why stories can also

deviate. The Reference Section lists authors who have researched the historical period this book covers together with historical accounts of the characters portrayed.

The result of Reena regressing eight people having lives contemporary with each other was a remarkable multi-coincidence. This was an unusual and comprehensive demonstration of the phenomenon of past life regression.

PSYCHOLOGY- CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

DYING TO LIVE

David Lorimer

■ 7 LESSONS FOR LIVING AND DYING

Dr Karen Wyatt

Watkins, 2020, 242 pp., £12.99,
p/b – ISBN 978-1-78678-911-0

■ LIVING FULLY, DYING CONSCIOUSLY

Sue Brayne

White Crow Books, 2020, 288
pp., £12.99, p/b –
ISBN 978-1-78677-113-1

■ WHAT HAS LIFE TAUGHT YOU?

Zoe Sallis

Watkins, 2020, 180 pp., £10.99,
p/b – ISBN 978-1-78678-350-9

I remember many years ago attending

a lecture by Elisabeth Kubler Ross at St James's Church in Piccadilly where she related the story of a man who came to her just after retirement, having received a terminal diagnosis with an estimated six weeks to live. He said: "I made a good living, but I never really lived." As you can imagine, I found this sentence etched firmly in my memory and resolved that I would never find myself in this position. At the same lecture, she reminded us that we are all churned in the washing tumbler of life, so the question is whether we come out crushed or polished; maybe crushed first, then polished later? The first two books ask what we can learn about life and living from death and dying and follow on from a book by Bronnie Ware that I reviewed a few years ago and entitled *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*. Just for the record, these are expressed in terms of five sentences beginning with the phrase "I wish I: had had the courage to live a life true to myself; hadn't worked so hard; had the courage to express my feelings; had stayed in touch with my

friends; had let myself be happier." These are powerful and practical messages that we can all apply.

Karen Wyatt is a physician, and her book is subtitled 'how to nurture what really matters.' It begins with some ground work around the themes of love and meaning, quoting Rumi's poignant and profound saying: 'Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become your greatest ally in your life's search for love and wisdom.'

For the author, our lives are a spiritual journey in a physical realm and as we move along our timeline, we need to engage more deeply with the spiritual realm, as Jung also observed as far back as the 1930s. She introduces two angles that are used in subsequent chapters: the view from the garden in terms of planting and harvesting, and the larger view from the galaxy encompassing life and the planet while acknowledging mystery and the limits of our human understanding. For the author, the dance of life is expressed in four underlying concepts: timing and time, balance of opposites in terms of achieving equanimity, rhythm as the flow of life and energy, and finally grace as generosity of abundance. These are illustrated in the many moving and transformative narratives throughout the book.

The seven lessons act as templates and contexts for living and dying:

- **Suffering:** embrace your difficulties
- **Love:** let your heart be broken
- **Forgiveness:** hold no resentments
- **Presence:** dwell in the present moment
- **Purpose:** manifest your highest potential
- **Surrender:** let go of expectations
- **Impermanence:** face your fear

This list is indeed a tall existential order when read like this, but these lessons do indeed represent what really matters in life and the greatest humans manifest them to the greatest extent. Suffering is universal and

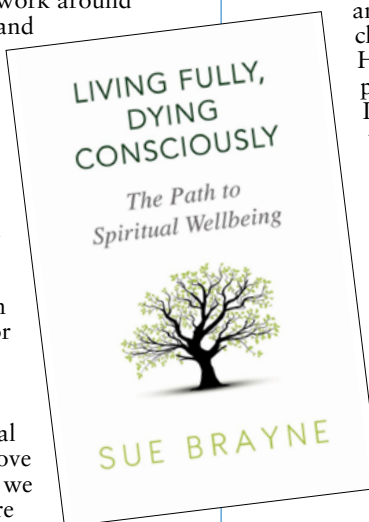
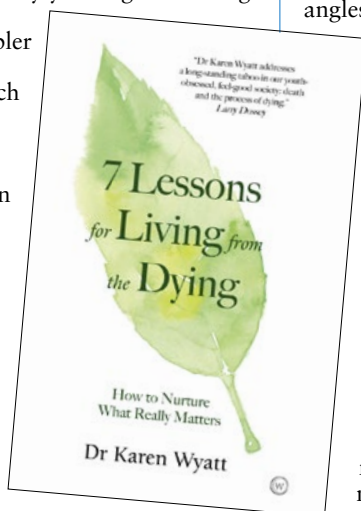
necessary to break down the old and make way for the new, as we are all currently experiencing in different degrees. In each lesson there are fruits to be harvested, and in the case of suffering, for instance, these are humility, patience, resilience

and connectedness. In the chapter on love, the banker Henry travels a similar path to Tolstoy's Ivan Illyich when he realises that none of his many possessions can fill the void he feels inside. Lying in a hospital bed and barely able to sip water, he holds the author's hand and says 'The only thing that matters is love, who did I love? How much did I love them? How did I show that I loved them?' This is heartrending in the circumstances and underlines the importance of

learning and practising these lessons before one becomes terminally ill.

We all have people to forgive and whose forgiveness we need, and here the ideal is to hold no resentment, as we see in an extraordinary interaction between three brothers and in the courage of an elderly artist. All spiritual teachers emphasise the importance of dwelling in the present moment, of 'being mindful and attentive in the here and now.' Once again, in the chapter on purpose, Rumi expresses this brilliantly: our purpose is 'to manifest the very nature of our spirit, which is touched by the spirit of God.' In the garden of life, this means 'producing the best crop possible, given the limitations of soil, weather and location of the plot of land.' (p. 112) Surrender means letting go of expectations and going with transition and transformation when it comes up. Impermanence is the essence of Buddhism that involves confronting our own mortality and the fears that hold us back, it is 'the doorway through which change arrives - change that brings growth and transformation.'

The last part of the book explains how we can all live these lessons, starting with what the author calls the daily AWE practice: *Awake* to possibilities, *Willing* to see the good in everything, fully *Engaged* with life in every moment. She tells a long story that illustrates all seven lessons and the ways in which they intertwine. She reminds us that the basic tasks of gardening involved planting seeds and pulling weeds, in other words an inner clearance leading ultimately to balance within ourselves, from which point we can



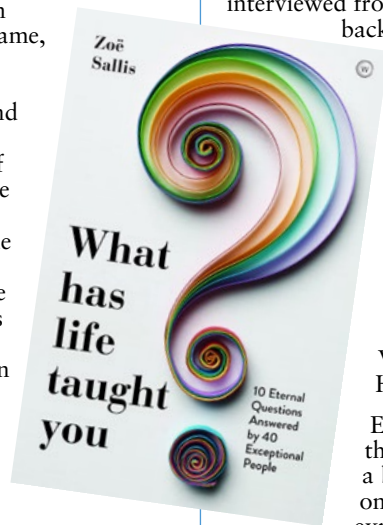
make an optimum contribution to our collective challenges. The author also gives some practical guidance and resources and suggestions for a practice schedule. All this makes the book essential reading for our time.

Sue Brayne's main focus is on the path to spiritual well-being, firmly based in her own experience and relating how she has overcome her many personal challenges. These three parts address the fear of living fully, the psychology of dying consciously, and the transpersonal dimension. As we know, death is still a taboo in our society and indeed underlies the panic response to the coronavirus; and there is a correlation between fear of death and fear of living fully, which we are spiritually designed to do. Sue analyses the components of fear and anxiety in terms of guilt and shame, grief, loss, anger and rage, seeing death as both a completion and a transition. She sees life as a succession of experiences where the crucial component is our mind and attitude - these often need to be transformed in the face of what she calls 'soulquakes' at the liminal space between outer and inner.

Like Karen Wyatt, Sue places a great emphasis on forgiveness and on balancing the various aspects of our lives, where she has a useful diagram explaining the four quadrants and needs: physical for security, intellectual for discernment, emotional for self-love, and spiritual for inner peace. Her discussion of the transpersonal draws on Maslow and the development of the spirit as transcending, the soul as attaching, fate as acceptance, destiny as choice and karma as attracting (diagram on p. 194). She sees the universe as being in us, leading to what we call synchronicity and prompting us through intuition. Her experience in hospices has given her a deep understanding of the actual process of dying, which she describes in some detail, ultimately seeing death as the moment when we are united with cosmic Love and where, inspiringly, 'each of us is an ambassador for Universal Love. (p. 233) It was moving to read Peter Fenwick's description/expectation of the dying process based on his extensive research and spiritual practice. Like Karen, Sue feels that we can most effectively serve the collective by getting our own house in order before

we join forces to help co-create a new world and one with a higher level of well-being – the book is an important signpost on this path.

The third book under consideration reminds me of some volumes I have in my library where distinguished people - mainly men - from the 1930s and 40s write about what they have learned from life. In this case, the author features the answers given by 40 outstanding people to 10 profound questions about life. These relate to your concept of God, the notion of an afterlife, karma, your moral code, destiny, what life has taught you so far, words of wisdom to pass on, our survival on the planet, who people admire most, and how you find peace within yourself. I had not heard of quite a number of the people interviewed from the author's own



background in theatre and acting, and the sheer variety creates part of the interest of the book: the journalists Robert Fisk and Sir David Frost, writers like Paul Coelho and Gore Vidal, and spiritual figures like Dadi Janki, the Dalai Lama, Neale Donald Walsch and Richard Holloway.

Every reader will have their own take on such a book, depending on their outlook and experience. For me, the most impressive and

illuminating answers were given by the Iranian Islamic scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr and the mystic Andrew Harvey, but also by Zac Goldsmith in relation to the planet. Nasr and Harvey are well known for their spiritual insight, so what they have to say is correspondingly of greater interest in this respect. For Nasr, 'the supreme goal of life is to know the truth and to live by the truth', and our main danger is that we have 'created a science based on power rather than wisdom.' For Harvey, we need 'an army of nonviolent lovers who come together, beyond dogma and creed, to take humanity and to transform the institutions of the Earth. This is our last and best hope, and that's what I'm dedicating my life to.' For him, 'the secret of life is humility. The humbler you are, the more life can guide you, the more love you can give and the more discernment you can practice without judgement, and not have any fantasies about how effective you are being.' Shimon Peres and Sir Peter Ustinov also have important things to say, but perhaps the penultimate word

goes to the Dalai Lama, who reminds us that the human mind is the key factor and that 'when we die nothing can be taken with us but the seeds of our life's work and our spiritual knowledge.'

To finish on a lighter note, I loved the story by Ed Begley Jr and his advice to slow down. He tells the story of a friend who had made elaborate travel arrangements to meet a guru at the Temple of Tranquillity in Indonesia. His travel plans went badly wrong so he missed connections and got delayed, having to make other complicated plans and finally arriving in Indonesia where he hired a car to take him to the temple. He says to the driver, "The Temple of Tranquillity and step on it!" At this point both the driver and his friend start to laugh, and Bailey reflects that we do this even with our highest goals by saying: "I want serenity and I want it now, dammit!" So beyond all these serious considerations, a sense of humour is no less essential in navigating our lives.

A TEMPLATE FOR AWAKENING

David Lorimer

■ FIERCE FEMININE RISING

Anaiya Sophia

Destiny Books, 2020,
240 pp., \$16.99, p/b –
ISBN 978-1-62055-859-1

■ THE HEART OF THE GREAT MOTHER

Christine R. Page MD

Bear and Co., 2020, 247 pp.,
\$16, p/b –
ISBN 978-1-59143-354-5

As we all know, humanity has been stopped in its tracks by the corona virus, which Christine reminds us is etymologically related to the Crow, symbolising death - just yesterday afternoon we saw two wending through the trees on our walk with horses, then only today I saw the first two swallows flying outside my window: death and rebirth, with trees blossoming all around, a time to withdraw and reflect. These two books both contain an incredibly powerful message for our time, the message of the Fierce Feminine, the Dark Mother, a collective upwelling of universal outrage and sacred rage at the way we are treating the planet and each other. You will probably have seen the various videos featuring a message from the virus telling us to consider the essentials and expressing the Earth's relief at a slowing down of our frenetic activity (though we

are still adding 220,000 people a day to the world population). Christine expresses this as the Dark Goddess calling "time" for all of us now: 'she is not interested in our bargaining tactics, excuses, or entreaties, especially those linked to our small ego's desire not to upset the status quo. It is time to move on...whether we are ready to or not.' (p. 63).

Anaiya is a neighbour, and not long before the outbreak escalated, we had a special dinner with another neighbour, Veronica Goodchild and her husband. I was reading her book at the time. It plunges the reader in at the deep end with the energy of Savage Grace demanding us to stand up and speak out in her name. The book embodies a potent and resonant energy of transmission that directly pierces the heart and galvanises us to participate in a massive global clean-up. As she puts it: 'Change is coming. Balance shall prevail.'

And all this before we knew exactly what was coming and how the Dark Agenda or Matrix Control System will try to engineer the situation for its own advantage: 'This includes the corrupt governments, the war-making industries, the over-producing, mind-numbing, addiction-feeding heartlessness of our modern day society, as well as the covert influences of anti-awakening that seem to be taking advantage of our digital technology to spread their virus.' (p. xiv, and do watch the film *Thrive* if you do not already know it) She continues that the Fierce Feminine 'is rising within us to initiate the full-on realisation of how vulnerable and fragile the whole human race and a great deal of nature are at this extremely dangerous moment in history' - prophetic words indeed that call for our personal deep commitment to sacred activism at all levels.

The four parts of Anaiya's introduce the Fierce Feminine and how to ignite it, how to take back our power, speaking up and speaking out, and piercing the veils of reality. Each chapter is followed by what she calls an example of 'sorrows of the world' including the Yulin dog meat festival, pig and dairy farming, death of the oceans, canned hunting for white lions, starving polar bears, nuclear weapons, overpopulation and overproduction, and examples of acts of evil, culminating in an archetypal original rape sequence involving priests and priestesses with the poignant question:

why did you do it? With the response: why did you let me? Then readers are invited to pause for reflection, bear witness to the sobriety of the situation, move on without answers, trusting the process and 'remembering that *this is an initiation*.' We are brought face-to-face with real horrors that are going on daily but which we tend to ignore so as to remain complacently within our comfort zones. She quotes Andrew Harvey in an arresting moment: 'what's more frightening? Being numb

with apathy as you sip yet another glass of Chardonnay as the last tree on the planet burns to the ground, or allowing your veins to be filled with the fire of Kali, protesting with your "No!" and wakefulness during the destruction of your planet and your possible extinction?' (p. 69) In addition, there are powerful transmissions of exercises and meditations that can be downloaded for direct practice.

If we do not collectively take back our power, then the Matrix Control System will continue rolling out its agenda including 5G, total surveillance and control while we meekly and conveniently continue behaving like timid sheep. Anaiya gives a great deal of practical guidance about how we can individually play our part in this awakening process involving a dark night of the soul and healing our wounds but also standing our ground with integrity and taking responsibility: she asks a series of searching questions about our values, attitudes and behaviour (p. 116). This does not just involve thinking, but feeling into our answers while fully taking on board the sorrows of the world, in themselves enough to generate massive sacred rage that then needs to be grounded and used for constructive purposes: including speaking truth to power, whatever the personal cost. Part of this process can also occur within the crucible of our deep intimate relationships as a means of healing, awakening and transforming our shadows. This leads to real freedom and the refusal to give the 'death machine' the power it needs to fulfil its enslavement of us.'

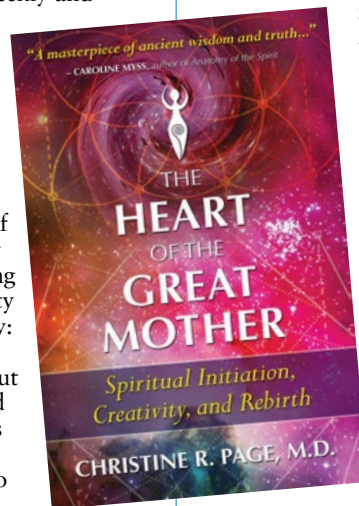
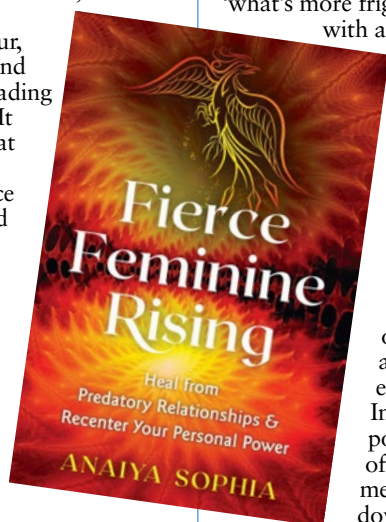
Christine's book is in many ways complementary and with a larger historical background addressing spiritual initiation, creativity and rebirth within a cyclical process of spirit moving into matter and back to spirit: birth, growth, nurturance, celebration, dissolution, death and rebirth. In the first chapter, a mentor tells her that 'together we can birth the world that encompasses the principles of cooperation and oneness through the acceptance of diversity, ensuring right relationship with all lifeforms who share this planet.' (p. 10) The first part introduces the Triple Goddess with its three archetypes of Virgin, Mother and Crone, citing many examples from different cultures. For current purposes, the Crone archetype is the most immediately relevant, representing like Kali both the tomb and womb of regeneration embodied in Christine's own transformative experience as a vulture goddess: 'I clean the bones of every animal, freeing each from its earthly attachment so its spirit can return to the source and be reborn.' The voice continues poignantly: 'Only those who fear death or have forgotten the regenerative cycles can see us as ugly pests. Others welcome us with open arms.' (p. 64).

Christine gives a lucid explanation of the Triple Goddess as the One Thing giving rise to her masculine counterpart as the One Mind where feminine force comes together with

masculine focus to give rise to intention. The feminine force shakes us up, while the masculine can bring order out of chaos. She then explains the hero myth mapped onto the zodiac and its relationship with sacred numbers before describing the archetypal alchemical transformation represented in the Emerald Tablet. The second part discusses the rhythms of the

moon and enables readers to find their natal lunar phase, in my case representing distillation and transformation. She also shows major sacred sites are linked to the creative cycles of life, with temples acting as intermediary vessels between heaven and earth.

The third part takes the reader on the journey of evolution and dissolution through the zodiac, with guidance along the way, for instance with respect to meeting our mirrors and integrating their message. At the



apex, the energetic process reverses and descent begins, also representing putrefaction and fermentation. This is an acknowledgement of decay and death which we now face as a species, and which we are invited to embrace and transform. Here there is no shortcut; we have to take ownership of these shadow aspects and personalities in the fire of purification in order to reach the centre. The sage represents the distillation of life wisdom whose role is to 'question our deepest intentions and beliefs until only the truth remains' and we step into true authority. In a discussion of the miraculous heart, it is encouraging to read that healthy cells can entrain sick cells back to health, 'causing both to beat in harmony' and reminding us to *be* healing rather than just giving healing; resonating with and transmitting the frequency of Divine Love.

As we are embraced by the Great Mother in these two transformative books, we are reminded that we all emerge from the One, to which we also return - unfolding then refolding, as Walter Russell put it. The core message is to wake up, to reconnect with the Source, with Life on Earth and with each other to bring about the birth of a new and more unified world that fundamentally respects freedom and diversity rather than attempting to impose digital slavery and social uniformity.

SIDESTEPPING GALILEO

Peter Reason

■ GALILEO'S ERROR: A NEW SCIENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Philip Goff

Rider, 2019, 240 pp., £14.99, p/b
– ISBN 978-1-84604-601-8

This is a book about the philosophical perspective of panpsychism, written by a leading academic advocate. Panpsychism refers to the view that mind (or sentience, or consciousness) is a fundamental aspect of matter; and, in tandem, that matter is a fundamental aspect of consciousness. Goff offers panpsychism as an alternative worldview to dualism, which holds that mind and matter are two separate aspects of reality; and materialism, which holds that there is nothing other than the stuff of the world as described by physical sciences.

The book is focussed around the problem of consciousness. David Chalmers has contrasted the 'easy' problem of explaining the link between consciousness and behaviour to the 'hard' problem of explaining why there is any consciousness at all in a

material world. Goff sidesteps both problems by showing that the origin of the problem of consciousness has its roots in Galileo Galilei's foundational articulation of the scientific worldview.

In his celebrated phrasing, Galileo told us that nature is a book open to our gaze, so long as we understood that it is 'written in the language of mathematics'. In doing this, Galileo bracketed off the material, 'primary', properties of the world from the sensory. Material properties - size, shape, location, motion, which came to be described as 'primary' - can indeed be described mathematically (at least in their external effects). But sensory, secondary, qualities - the colours, tastes, smells of experience, the redness of a tomato and the spiciness of the paprika - can scarcely be communicated from one person to another, certainly not mathematically. Goff points out that this re-imagining of nature was essentially a *philosophical* move: it has no empirical basis, and so no 'scientific' justification.

But sensory qualities didn't go away. Galileo had no intention of including these in his mathematical science. Rather, he saw them as existing in the soul: 'Just as beauty exists only in the eye of the beholder, so colours, smells, tastes and sounds only exist in the conscious soul of the human being'. Galileo took a dualist view and 'only ever intended to provide us with a partial description of reality'. Essentially, Galileo's philosophy of nature *created* the problem of consciousness that now preoccupies so many academics.

Goff suggests three possible solutions to this problem. One is to accept Galileo's dualism that there are immaterial minds beyond materialistic understanding. The second solution is to hold to the materialist view that, in time, consciousness will be explained in terms of the chemistry of the brain, or indeed explained away altogether as illusion. The third solution, which Goff argues for, is panpsychism, which holds that consciousness is a 'fundamental and ubiquitous feature of the physical world'.

The panpsychist view holds that consciousness in some form is part and parcel of the physical world, that simple forms of consciousness exist *as fundamental aspect of matter*. 'We know that consciousness is real

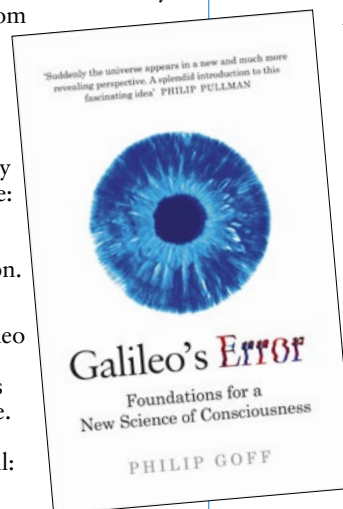
and so we have to account for it somehow. What panpsychism offers us is a way of integrating consciousness into our scientific picture of the world...' Goff asserts that there 'seems nothing incoherent with the idea that consciousness might exist in very simple forms'; and argues that complex consciousness of human and animal brains can be explained as evolving from the simple consciousness inherent in matter.

Goff takes us back to the ideas of the physicist Arthur Eddington and the philosopher Bertrand Russell. Writing in the 1930s, they argued that modern physics has been so enormously successful because it tells us what matter *does*; but it fails to tell us anything about what matter *is*, to account for the *nature* of matter.

Mass, distance, force, all give names to properties of matter, but say nothing about what these properties actually are. In the nineteenth century it was still possible to conceive of atoms as tiny billiard balls bouncing off each other, but the strange worlds of relativity and quantum dynamics have put paid to this. This is 'Galileo's error' of the title: mathematical models do not 'open our gaze' to the *intrinsic nature of matter*.

This leads us toward a broader conception of science that doesn't confuse the practical utility of prediction and control with the ontological question of a complete theory of reality. Goff writes, 'Here is the idea. Physics characterises mass and charge "from the outside" (in terms of what they do) but "from the inside" (in terms of their intrinsic nature) mass and charge are incredibly simple forms of consciousness'. It isn't that neurosciences have to explain how consciousness arises in the material interactions of the brain; it rather seeds consciousness as actually that bit of reality we have direct access to and really can understand. The rest (matter) is mystery!

The final chapter moves beyond the issue of consciousness and places panpsychism in the context of the climate crisis and what he calls a 'naturalised spirituality'. Panpsychism directly challenges the view that humans are separate from nature; and the related view that nature has no value in itself, other than its utility to humans. Goff writes, 'Panpsychism has the potential to transform our relationship with the natural world. If panpsychism is true, the rain forest



is teeming with consciousness. As conscious entities, trees have value in their own right: chopping down a tree becomes an action of immediate moral significance. Moreover, on the panpsychist worldview, humans have a deep affinity with the natural world: we are conscious creatures embedded in a world of consciousness'.

This is a truly important statement. Panpsychism offers a lifegiving alternative to the strange combination of materialism and dualism that has evolved from Galileo's science, and which has such destructive consequences for our world. It is unfortunate that this comes too little and too late in the book. The problem of the origin of consciousness, while fascinating, is trivial compared to the existential question of the future of life on Earth. Tying panpsychism so firmly to the problem of consciousness does it a disservice. I would follow panpsychic philosopher Freya Mathews and argue that panpsychism provides the metaphysical grounding that will allow us to live as true participants of life on Earth.

Written elegantly for a general readership rather than an academic audience, Philip Goff's book is very clearly written, making complex ideas maybe not easy, but accessible. This is a clear introduction to the panpsychic perspective on the problem of consciousness, and a first step in bringing the wider significance of panpsychism to a general readership.

ECOLOGY AND ECONOMICS

THE DIGITAL AS POLITICAL

David Lorimer

■ FUTURE POLITICS

Jamie Susskind

Oxford, 2018/2020, 516 pp.,
£9.99, p/b –
ISBN 978-0-19-884892-9

It is not surprising that this brilliant and ground-breaking book was chosen as a Guardian book of the day and Prospect and Evening Standard book of the year when it came out in hardback. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to get to grips with the profound and far-reaching impacts of digital technology on politics. The fundamental issues have moved on from 20th-century preoccupations with the relationship between states and markets and require a radical rethink of the scope of basic political categories. And as the author points out in his preface to the paperback edition, we are neither intellectually, philosophically nor morally prepared for the world we are creating.

The six main parts address what the author calls the digital life world, then the respective futures of power, liberty, democracy, justice and politics. Given increasingly capable systems, increasingly integrated technology and increasingly quantified societies, the challenge posed is the extent of control by digital systems whereby those who control technology will have enhanced opportunities to control us through this very power and to limit our freedom accordingly. As Sir Tim Berners-Lee observed, he and his colleagues are 'philosophical engineers' redesigning the very basis of our political and social fabric. So it becomes important to be able to explore these issues within the context of political theory and its practical applications. Here some basic vocabulary and analysis is enormously helpful, for instance the elements of social order in terms of coordination, cooperation and control and various types of analysis - conceptual, normative and contextual. Then questions of how we gather, store, analyse and communicate information. All this is occurring within the overall context of our commercial and political world expressed through the Internet and driven by the migration of advertising revenues online where we as users unwittingly become the product. It is still crucial, however, to be able to hold elites to account.

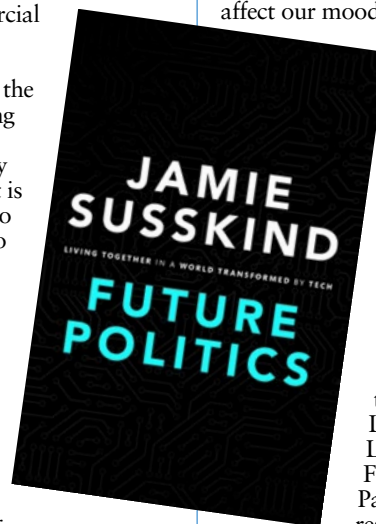
The section on the digital lifeworld is enormously informative and will surprise readers with its reporting on AI with, for instance, programmes for lip reading performing at 93% accuracy and forecast of outcomes of legal cases at 79%, not to mention records on chess and other board games. Machine learning is now developing automation of automation with computing power expected to multiply by 64 in terms of speed in the next 10 years. Algorithms are omnipresent, as Amazon and Netflix customers will know only too well (adverts for a suitcase I looked at came up on my weather forecast even though I had bought another one), and this technology is pervasive, connective, sensitive, constitutive and immersive. We now generate more data in two hours than was generated since the beginning of time up until 2003, while companies like Facebook and Google compile 'life logs' from our 'data exhaust' that are able to predict our activities and decisions.

In the new connected digital lifeworld, code and algorithms are power. Power can either be power to (empowerment)

or power over in terms of force, scrutiny and perception-control, all of which the author examines in detail. Power is further analysed not only as force, but also coercion, influence, authority and manipulation. We are now open to scrutiny - and consequently to a corresponding abuse of power - to an unprecedented extent with respect to our lives, desires, plans and even purposes; and all the more so with the advent of smart devices to be intensified with the advent of 5G - the author gives a telling example of a clue to a murder derived from an unusually excessive use of water metered by the criminal's own device. And self-driving cars will not allow us to break speed limits or park in restricted areas. Positively, the author argues that this could constitute a form of 'wise restraint' with smart fridges advising obese people on what not to eat. Perception control is effectively behaviour control, and we already subject to a great deal of filtering, for instance news feeds and searches (research has shown that positive and negative news feeds can affect our moods accordingly, as the current coronavirus crisis so tellingly demonstrates). So the bottom line is that these powerful economic entities wield immense political power.

Liberty and freedom also require new concepts beyond freedom of action and thought. The author offers and defines the scope of Digital Libertarianism, Digital Liberalism, Digital Federalism, Digital Paternalism (see wise restraint above), Digital Moralism and Digital

Republicanism. Online technology offers us new affordances while at the same time feeding into predictive algorithms with political implications, as we saw with the 2016 US election. Interestingly, both in this campaign and in Brexit, up to a third of messages and tweets came from bots, and this is likely to continue - it is already also the case with respect to the debate on climate change. The discussion on liberty then feeds into future democracy: 'if we care about liberty, there must be a corresponding increase in the ability of the citizenry to hold that power to account.' (p. 208) The author then gives a brief history of democracy with more details of online campaigning and highlighting its new forms, including, crucially, deliberative democracy at a time when people are increasingly confined within self-looping bubbles of information and no longer critically exposed to other



viewpoints. This phenomenon is related to 'no-platforming' controversies in universities as well as the rise of fake news and the misleading equating of truth with belief. As the author points out, there must be mechanisms for the resolution of reasonable moral disagreement.

Next comes justice, principally in terms of asset and wealth distribution and recognition 'how humans see and treat each other, including our systems of social status and esteem' (p. 208) - which entails new forms of assessment and ranking applied not only in tourism but increasingly also within companies and universities. This is how students become customers and is partially responsible for the steady rise in first-class degrees as universities seek to market themselves. The author gives examples of algorithmic injustice according to how algorithms are set and the views they reflect; in this sense, neutrality can entrench existing injustice. Then there is a chapter on technological unemployment where the author observes that, between 2000 and 2010, 'the US lost about 5.6 million manufacturing jobs, 85% of which losses were attributable to technological change.' (p. 295) The author's brother Daniel has just produced a whole book on this subject - *Future Work* - Daniel and his father also wrote a book together on the future of the professions in 2016. Work is valued for income, status and well-being, while what the author calls the work paradigm reflects these assumptions. There is no doubt that we need a fundamental debate around future work scenarios, including these value connections and the relative capacity of people to flourish with more time for leisure. Wealth and capital will also need to be reconsidered, and our current crisis is bringing fraternity or solidarity to the fore beyond a conservative focus on liberty and a socialist concern with equality - some people are now promulgating extending the notion of a 'sharing economy' and we already see this manifest in one form in Uber and Airbnb.

In his final reflections on politics, the author notes that we will not only have to make technology companies accountable, but also 'keep the power of the supercharged state in check' as we already witnessing with surveillance totalitarianism in China. Legitimacy must still be based on consent and fairness, which will entail both transparency and structural regulation involving appropriate forms of accountability. We must ask ourselves 'how much of our collective life should be directed and controlled by powerful digital systems - and on what terms' (p. 361) within limits analysed by HLA Hart in his seminal *The Concept of Law* (p. 365).

Despite its magisterial scope, I felt that there were a few important gaps in the analysis. The psychological aspect of resistance to change was not addressed, nor the importance of the aware individual as exemplified in the work of CG Jung - *The Undiscovered Self*, for example. Much of the thinking was left hemisphere in terms of Iain McGilchrist's approach, and the work of Riane Eisler on dominator and partnership societies was not mentioned, nor that of Sir Karl Popper on open and closed societies. In terms of themes, consciousness was absent as was our overall relationship with nature within the Western worldview; and the discussion on democracy could have benefited from a consideration of the role of 'nudging' in policy terms. These represent mainly what one might call the inner attitudes rather than outer structures, but it is essentially the inner that drives the outer the more aware and free one becomes inwardly. Developing and maintaining our inner freedom constitutes a great challenge for each of us in our time.

THE POWER OF IMAGINATION

David Lorimer

■ FROM WHAT IS TO WHAT IF

Rob Hopkins

Chelsea Green, 2019, 228 pp.,
£19.99, h/b -
ISBN 978-1-40358-905-5

Rob Hopkins is best known for his role in co-founding Transition Town Totnes and Transition Network. He supports the vision of the World Social Forum that 'another world is possible' while stressing the central importance of cultivating the imagination, which has been downplayed by dominant education systems based on testing and measurement. There is a certain irony and hope in our current situation to the title of the introduction: what if things turned out okay? However, the question is now even more important and imagination absolutely essential. It is easy to forget that everything human we see around us was once a thought in somebody's mind. I am writing this review at a bureau designed by my grandfather, Sir Robert Lorimer - the bureau originated in his imagination.

The book is structured around nine 'what if' questions: taking play seriously, imagination and health, following the lead of nature, reclaiming our attention, nurturing imagination among the young, better storytelling, asking better questions, prioritising the cultivation of imagination and finally: what if all this came to pass? The content is based on over 100 interviews and projects around the world, all of which exemplify a reconnection to local community (and sometimes to nature). Some of these projects are amazingly imaginative. Antanas Mockus was originally President of the University of Colombia, but was sacked for an incident involving dropping his trousers when confronting disruptive far-left student activists; he told them 'innovative behaviour can be useful when you run out of words.' Bizarrely, this gave him a platform to run as Mayor of Bogota where in office he took on the notoriously corrupt traffic police, who pocketed most of the fines and had little impact on drivers. So he hired 420 mime artists 'who stood at the city's intersections showing red cards to bad drivers, stopping the traffic and applauding good drivers. He sacked the entire traffic police department, offering them their jobs back if they retrained as mimes. Four hundred did. His actions reduce traffic fatalities by 50%.' (p. 29) Reflecting on this success, he commented that people respond to humour and playfulness from politicians.

Rob highlights the growing mental health crisis where media messages and capitalism 'colonise people's imagination of what is possible' and hijack attention for commercial purposes. US electronic media consumption has gone up from 9.5 hours a day in 2014 to over 11 in 2018. Moreover, there is an

inextricable link between attention and imagination, which both require mental space that is now heavily cluttered on a daily basis. Here, as Sherry Turkle observes, face-to-face conversation is vital, without which we are 'less empathic, less connected, less creative and fulfilled.' (p. 81) Faced with the scale of global challenges, we have no alternative but to 'imagine a way out of them.' This has to entail cultivating imagination among the young, and

Rob gives some inspiring examples of project-based learning around the world which may even require, according to some people, a



process of unlearning and un-schooling as first suggested by Ivan Illich in the 1970s. Corresponding to a loss of biodiversity is a thinning of language and possibility, according to the writer Robert Macfarlane. And it is sobering to read that 'in 1903 there were almost 500 varieties of lettuce, and by 1983 just 36. Similarly, the number of cucumber varieties fell from 285 to just 16. Cabbage varieties fell from 544 to 28, and radishes from 463 to 27.' (p. 56)

Storytelling is the substance of traditional oral cultures and conveys a framework of meaning. As Alex Evans also argues above, facts are not enough – we need a new story for a corresponding change of behaviour. When people are given the opportunity, imaginative possibilities flourish, but in our current circumstances, as Rob points out, 'imagining the future in a positive way is an act of immense courage, of resistance, of rebellion.' The alternative is passively succumbing to negative stories and a corresponding 'despair, hopelessness and discouragement' promulgated by mainstream media. This is not the first book I have read recently that quotes Milton Friedman: 'Only a crisis – actual or perceived – reduces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable (my italics).' (p. 119)

As Rob argues, we certainly have to start asking questions, and he gives various examples of successful projects that have done just this, for instance in Derby, Preston, Norwich and Liège in Belgium. In the current pandemic crisis, it was anticipated in the planning scenario of October 2019 that the story or narrative would have to be managed to keep things on track. We are now seeing this activated with the censorship of alternative views on Facebook and YouTube, especially those that question the global vaccination agenda promulgated by Bill Gates and the WHO. If you control perception, you also control behaviour, as advertisers and propagandists know only too well. A danger highlighted by a former MEP is that 'the volume of mental stuff simply overwhelms the imagination.' We do not need passive assent but rather an active deliberative democracy – 'the Great Pause' will give us some imaginative space. In this respect, this book is essential reading 'about what kind of future we might create, a future that it is still possible to create' – otherwise we will have to accept the future planned by those who exercise

power behind the scenes: if we do not use the power of imagination to envisage radical new possibilities we will end up with an imposed extension of our current dystopia.

A NEW COVENANT

David Lorimer

■ THE MYTH GAP

Alex Evans

Eden Project Books, 2017,
152 pp., £9.99, h/b –
ISBN 978-1-909-51311-2

With his extensive background as an activist and policy adviser to the British government and the UN, Alex is in a unique position to reflect on environmental and political developments concerning the crisis of unsustainability. He asks the question: what happens when evidence and arguments aren't enough? The rise of the Tea Party, Brexit and the election of Donald Trump demonstrated to him that the thinking of NGOs (and Remain in the 2016 referendum) as insider technocrats with a fact-led analysis was powerless against populist outsiders with a value-led story. Alex also observed first-hand how high-level UN negotiations collapsed into national interests where politicians are grandstanding for their own domestic electorates and revert to economic self-interest. The outcome of the 2009 Copenhagen climate conference made him realise the need for a mass movement to support a restorative economy, one with a shared culture and values and enabling congregating spaces with the aim of bringing others along rather than holding the high moral ground and polarising through enemy narratives. Alex criticises what he calls Collapsitarianism as a self-fulfilling prophecy brought about through passivity and fatalism.

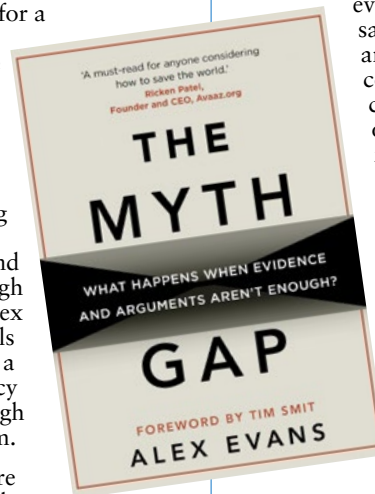
Generically, myths are designed to explain the world and ourselves by providing a larger narrative. Alex contends in his title that we are missing such a myth to help create and shape our reality and sense of purpose. In the second part, he proposes five myths for a new century: a larger us, a longer now, a better good life, redemption and restoration. This involves extending our empathy horizon and a vision 'capable of achieving non-zero-sum outcomes at the global scale' (p. 74). He quotes Tony Leiserowitz on climate change: 'you almost couldn't design a problem that is a worse fit for our

underlying psychology' – like frogs in slowly heating water, we fail to take the long-term seriously and react only to immediate emergencies. And as a species, we are probably as an adolescent stage. Moreover, as Jaron Lanier observes, 'the dominant story is machine-centric. It's technological determinism (p. 50). Prophets can play an important role in a narrative of redemption, as Alex observes, quoting Walter Brueggeman: they force people to face up to reality, help them deal with the corresponding despair and give them the hope for the future. Part of this hope lies in the centrality of restoration – sustainability is insufficient. Restoration is about 'healing, repairing, resurrecting environments and returning them to their natural state' (p. 73).

In formulating 'an Everlasting or Cosmic Covenant', Alex brings in the work of Margaret Barker on Jerusalem's lost First Temple with a corresponding loss of the goddess consort of Yahweh – she is Wisdom while the covenant 'is a vision of the unity of all things, and how the visible material world relates to another dimension of existence that unites all things into one divinely ordained system' (p. 83). Things fall apart when we have a science divorced from wisdom and a plundering economy exploiting the earth to the limit, giving rise to dysfunctional systems embodying structural and spiritual evil: as Acton famously said, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. One central concept is that of sacrifice leading to restoration, which is interestingly illustrated in the classic work by CS Lewis, JRR Tolkien and JK Rowling. In the Hebrew tradition, every seventh day is a sabbath, every seventh year the land lies fallow and every 49th year there is a Jubilee acting as a major reset. Sacrifice acts as a driver of restoration where

the covenant heals creation and brings it back into balance.

In spite of our technological capacities, we find ourselves 'in a situation of extraordinary vulnerability' as the events of the last few weeks have decisively demonstrated. We need to find a higher unity of purpose based on planetary rather than national identities, interests and values. This means becoming aware of the limitations of our ways of thinking, as David Bohm articulated his concept of dialogue. Any potential mass movement has to embody local



as well as international elements in terms of community and a sense of belonging. Indeed, community is one of six themes proposed here, the others being personal transformation, social transformation, purpose finding, creativity and accountability. It remains to be seen whether we are capable in the short term of extending our boundaries and empathy horizons to include the whole of humanity, and this is where visionary leadership is essential, along with grassroots initiatives and pressure. Above all, we need to reimagine and re-articulate the future, which Alex characterises as Eden 2.0. Crucially, economic activity must sustain environmental health. Revisiting the Earth Charter might also be a good starting point and those who would like to become more directly informed and involved can visit Alex's Collective Psychology project at www.collectivepsychology.org - overall, this a lucid and well argued contribution towards a collective narrative that can overcome the myth gap of the book's title.

GENERAL

FULL SPECTRUM KNOWING

David Lorimer

■ RE-ENCHANTING THE ACADEMY

Edited by Angels Voss (SMN) and Simon Wilson

Rubedo Press, 2017, 366 pp., £21, p/b – ISBN 978-1-943710-13-3

Max Weber first popularised the idea of disenchantment over 100 years ago, but the process has only intensified since that time and in the universities especially since the triumph of an accounting and measurement mentality from the early 1980s. This book emerged from a conference on the subject at the University of Kent in Canterbury in 2015. It is based on the premise that education has to nourish and inspire both heart and mind 'if it is to lead future generations of students out of the cave of policy-led bureaucratisation and financially-led consumerism into the creative freedom of their own souls.' As such, the authors represent a resistance or reclamation movement aimed at rebalancing the emphasis of education in terms of what Iain McGilchrist refers to as left and right hemisphere thinking, analysis and imagination. This requires 'going against the grain of our contemporary scientisms, our functional instrumentalist imperatives, and even our enlightened liberal agendas of secular humanism, which will have no truck with a magical reality as, well, *true*.' (p. 15) Crucial to this process is metaphorical thinking

and a corresponding revival of the arts with their intrinsic cultural value. The four parts are devoted to re-enchancing the institution, the curriculum, the mind, and nature and body.

The first essay is a wide-ranging discussion of the enchantment of learning by Patrick Curry, whose book on enchantment is reviewed in Books in Brief below. He reminds readers of Newman's thesis that the University should be a place where 'scholars seek truth, pursue and transmit knowledge for knowledge's sake – irrespective of the consequences, implications and utility of the endeavour.' This is precisely the ethos that has been undermined in the last 40 years, with a corresponding impoverishment of the imagination and a grim focus on results and outcomes. We have also lost the metaphysical understanding of the nature of the human being where wisdom is the ultimate rather than factual knowledge this involves a cultivation of being as well as knowing. Eduard Heyning contributes a piece on panpsychism and the academy, tracing this back to Renaissance philosophers and linking it with the work of William James, RM Bucke, Aldous Huxley, CG Jung and most recently Freya Mathews who, like Seyyed Hossein Nasr in his 1967 book *Man and Nature*, realised that the environmental crisis is a symptom of deeper issues.

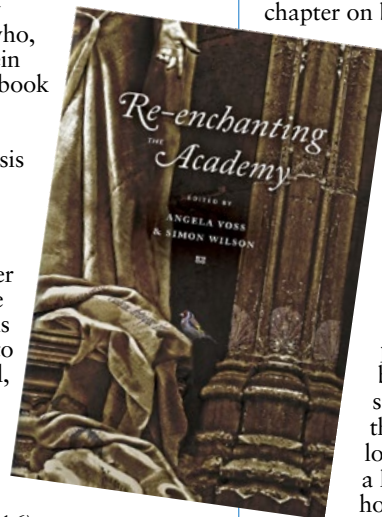
Angela Voss explores the power of symbol and the mediaeval exegesis enabling readers to move from 'literal, to allegorical, to tropological or moral, to anagogic for mystical readings of Scripture' (p. 116). This is an important point because scientism and fundamentalism are two sides of the same literalistic coin corresponding to a loss of depth and the sacred. Traditionally, we have three eyes: the eye of flesh or sense, the eye of reason and the eye of the spirit or heart. Modern universities cultivate only the first two, *episteme* and not *gnosis*. Angela quotes Bernardo Kastrup's observation that there is a critical difference between emotionally taking the Christian myth of literal truth and intellectually doing so, which leads to intolerance and persecution. Julia Moore's daring contribution addresses the contrast between the experimental *séance* and the academy, providing a revealing chart on p. 177. She analyses the methods used by a number of investigators where the

distinctions between fiction or fantasy and objective reality are blurred and result in fierce opposition or outright dismissal. Her conclusion is that there is in fact no clear-cut ontological distinction between the subjective and objective, as we also find in participatory methodologies and the experimenter effect. It is easier to ignore rather than engage with these realms that subvert an exclusively rational approach.

The imagination can be a vehicle towards wholeness, as argued by Anita Klujber quoting Northrop Frye and his idea that literary teaching involves the transfer of imaginative energy from literature to student, and involving both emotion and intellect. This is exemplified in both Yeats and the work of Kathleen Raine who founded the Temenos Academy and who was the leading scholar of Blake in her generation (this theme is also taken up by Judith Way). In the last part, we encounter directly nature and the body, reading about 'active care' opening up awareness of interrelationships, then the power of rewilding and immersion in nature. There is an intriguing participatory chapter on breathing making space

for 'empathetic perception.' Another chapter describes right brain consciousness in the learning process in Balkan dance into the consequences of exclusion from the academic and learning process of 'women, nature in the body, joy, celebration and play, colour, creativity, beauty, a sense of the sacred, communion with the divine, laughter and love of life' - this is quite a list! The author explains how traditionally women in Greece and the Balkans

have been in charge of dance and ceremonial matters involving the great transitions of life and death – much of this is embedded in line and chain dances 'taught without teaching, and learnt without learning', hence fully and literally embodied in a common heritage and identity. We have recently experienced this in south-west France where we regularly attend such traditional dance evenings that elicit a palpable feeling of connectedness and community. Needless to say, these have been suspended during the lockdown, but such contact is vital while also connecting the past with the present. Taken as a whole, the volume explores the many dimensions of re-enchantment, providing a crucial source of Renaissance for our time.





David Lorimer

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

Books in Brief

SCIENCE- PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

■ Einstein's Unfinished Revolution

Lee Smolin

Penguin 2020, 321 pp., £9.99, p/b.

Subtitled 'the search for what lies beyond the quantum', this is a brilliant exposition of the field and its development, exploring in particular the case for a realist rather than anti-realist interpretation of quantum physics and criticising the hegemony of the Copenhagen interpretation. Realism is the position that the natural world exists independently of our minds and that the properties of matter can be comprehended and described by us: 'they in no way depend on our knowledge or perception of it', as is the common (neo-Kantian) understanding of observation in quantum mechanics and the collapse of the wave function. Smolin's starting point is that current models only allow us to know half of what we need to know, as reflected in Heisenberg's uncertainty principle with respect to waves and particles. After explaining the development of quantum mechanics, he goes on to discuss what quantum mechanics does not explain and the triumph of anti-realism with Niels Bohr's notion of complementarity.

The three central figures of the second part are Louis de Broglie, John Bell and David Bohm. De Broglie extended the notion of the wave and particle to the whole of matter, which was then mathematically formulated in Schrödinger's wave equation. He presented his pilot wave theory to the Solvay conference in 1927; this theory 'predicts everything quantum mechanics does, but explains a good deal more' through the influence of the wave on the particle. However, his contribution was ignored by Copenhagen textbooks, and this line of thinking was dormant until taken up by David Bohm's hidden variable theory in the early 1950s, which Smolin sees as different

versions of the same idea. Ironically, seemingly through the influence of a now discredited paper by John von Neumann, even de Broglie himself thought that Bohm's theory was wrong, like his own previous proposal. Einstein's reaction was also discouraging, and continued neglect of Bohm's contribution throughout his life – he was only elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in his 70s. Smolin is somewhat disparaging about Bohm's mystical and philosophical quest, although he does acknowledge his courage and vision in taking this step. Just this morning, by coincidence, I was reading the conclusion of an article by his collaborator Basil Hiley who argues that these 1952 papers referred to 'were not an attempt to find a deterministic, mechanical account of the quantum formalism', but rather a step towards a deeper understanding of a particle as 'some quasi stable semi-autonomous feature of the unfolding process.' One needs to understand Bohm's philosophy explained in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* as a point of departure.

The third part is devoted to a survey of current thinking in developing an approach based on common sense realism. Smolin reviews historical attempts in this respect and explores ways of going beyond pilot wave theory and collapse models. His own approach begins with principles (though as Nicholas Maxwell argues, one should in fact begin with presuppositions), moving on to hypotheses that must satisfy the principles, models illustrating their partial implications, and only then complete theories. His five principles are background independence, the relationality of space and time, causal completeness, reciprocity and the identity of indiscernibles, all of which he regards as aspects of a single principle, namely Leibniz's principle of sufficient reason. This then leads on to three hypotheses: that time, in the sense of causation, is fundamental, that it is irreversible and that space is emergent. Smolin then elaborates a theory of relational hidden variables as a 'simultaneous completion of quantum mechanics and general relativity', describing some recent

developments in this respect. General readers can just about keep up with the narrative even if some technical details will elude them. The elephant in the room is referred to only in the preface: 'let us tiptoe past the hard question of consciousness to simpler questions.' However, it is clear that consciousness plays a very different role in a realist account of quantum mechanics, even though not for David Bohm - there is plenty more thinking to be done, but this book is a highly readable and stimulating contribution.

■ Transcendence

Gaia Vince

Allen Lane 2019, 294 pp., £20, h/b.

Subtitled 'how humans evolved through fire, language, beauty and time', this highly readable account of biological and cultural evolution characterises humans as the most successful species on earth representing a 'planet-altering force of nature' now recognised in the geological term Anthropocene. It is not wholly true to argue that we determine the course of our own destiny - Will Durant observes that civilisation exists by geological consent - and an element missing from the book is the cyclical nature of civilisations in terms of rise and decline. The main evolutionary factors are genes, environment and culture, the latter becoming prevalent in the course of time. There is an element of a triumphal march in the overarching narrative, which struck me as hubristic, although the author's argument that we are further transforming our species into a superorganism, which she calls 'Homni' is an interesting one - in this context, the meaning of transcendence is socio-biological, and there is no mention of a spiritual dimension of reality nor of the danger that our cleverness is outstripping our wisdom as 'intelligent designers' developing ourselves into cyborgs - there are downsides and challenges involved in technologies such as CRISPR, one of the latest manifestations of precision engineering language terms of snipping and editing that does not reflect the complex reality and is an extension of the mechanistic mindset. The superorganism metaphor could potentially be very useful as it suggests a sophisticated degree of mutuality and cooperation which have now become an evolutionary imperative. Another missing element is feeling - the principal developments described are technological without deep consideration of the human element, although this is acknowledged to some extent in the final chapter when the author reflects on social mistakes as a 'fault in humanity's cultural algorithm', which

can also be described in terms of a discourse of evil and the shadow - I did, however, appreciate the sentence on the final page that it is 'only by recognising and embracing our shared humanity on our one living planet will we achieve a good, liveable Anthropocene.'

■ Conversations with Galileo

William Shea, foreword by Dava Sobel

Watkins 2019, 115 pp., £9.99, h/b.

This format provides an informative and accessible introduction to Galileo's life along with a series of fictional dialogues based on biographical facts. Appropriately, the author is Galileo Professor of the History of Science at the University of Padua, and has written several books about Galileo and the scientific revolution. The first part is a brief life, followed by well-informed and plausible dialogues where readers learn not only about Galileo's science but also about his inheritance of family debt (his older daughter was a nun), his love of wine and women, the nature of his teaching assignments and the fact that he was also an astrologer and played the lute. Interestingly, in view of the current crisis, there is a dialogue on the 1630s plague where 50,000 people died in Venice alone. He himself was quarantined for 18 days.

MEDICINE-HEALTH

■ The Future of Homo?

Michel Odent (Hon SMN)

World Scientific 2019, 183 pp., £18.99, p/b - ebook £14.99.

Dr Michel Odent celebrates his 90th birthday this year and in this wide-ranging new book asks a series of questions surrounding what he calls primal health (www.primalhealthresearch.com) which he has been researching over many decades. The style of these articles is academic with many references, but nevertheless accessible to the general reader. One of his most important overall contentions is that we have over-socialised the birth process in terms of medical intervention and even interference in ways that are inimical to our own evolutionary history. He shows how many indigenous women give birth alone and undisturbed or with only a few supportive companions. This ensures what he calls neocortical inhibition, a mental and emotional state conducive to a smooth birthing process. Women need to be protected against all possible stimulations of the neocortex since the 'birth process is an involuntary process under the control

of primitive brain structures we share with the other mammals' (p. 14). In this sense, he recommends a birth environment with candles rather than bright lights overhead since this kind of light inhibits melatonin release.

In a chapter on pre-labour Caesareans, he notes that we underestimate the multiple effects on babies of stress and microbial deprivation in such cases, recommending that Caesareans should be delayed until the onset of labour. This is part of Michel's emphasis on our 'cultural lack of interest in the possible long-term consequences of the way babies are born' (p. 76) resulting from what he calls the scientification of love associated with a dominating attitude towards nature and cultural control not only of genital sexuality, childbirth and lactation, but also of access to transcendence 'and the association of orgasmic states with concepts of shame, culpability and fear' (p. 111). Hence his recommendation that childbirth needs to be de-socialised and the need for privacy recognised since the very socialisation of childbirth involves inhibitory factors and a language of management and control where the woman is treated as a patient in a largely passive role. Besides the essays on childbirth, there are also interesting papers on the future of evolutionary thinking and psychotherapy, abbreviations and a reflection on the epigenetic clock. A very stimulating volume, especially for those in the field.

■ Holistic Counselling

Moshe Daniel Block ND

Psyche Books (John Hunt) 2020, 398 pp., £20.99, p/b.

This pioneering book by a naturopathic doctor and homeopath has been justly acclaimed by specialists as a breakthrough in uniting the fields of mind-body medicine and psychology by helping identify the root cause of disease. It introduces the 'VIS' dialogue as a new counselling technique where VIS refers to the healing power of nature (*vis medicatrix naturae*) within a multidimensional understanding of the human being with four principal levels of soul, mind, emotions and body. The first part introduces the philosophical background in terms of seven principles, including the need for physicians to heal themselves. These principles then form a checklist to compare allopathic systems and holistic approaches where it becomes clear that the allopathic approach is not addressed at healing the whole person as an individual, does not address the fundamental cause of

disease nor does it act in cooperation with the healing power of nature; it is, however, essential in certain well-defined circumstances.

The author shows how false beliefs can lie at the root of physical conditions, and provides detailed guidance on techniques, including the importance of using non-directed questions, following the stream and going deeper into the rabbit hole until the cause is discovered – at this point of recognition, the patient can make a choice to change; in this context the attitude of the practitioner is also critical. There are complete lists of incisive and specific questions as well as advice on overcoming obstacles and closing questions. The process will often involve a reorientation and redefinition of the patient's identity. The book will be fruitful reading especially for mind-body practitioners and therapists who will find the structuring and sequence of questions for sessions very helpful.

■ Living with the Long-Term Effects of Cancer

Dr Cordelia Galgut

Jessica Kingsley 2020, 206 pp., £12.99, p/b.

This is a very significant and courageous book for health professionals, patients, carers and family members written by a psychologist who was first diagnosed with bilateral breast cancer 15 years ago and is the author of two earlier books on emotional and physical effects of living with cancer. The book questions the assumption that those affected by cancer will simply recover and get back to normal when emotional, psychological and physical side-effects can in fact produce a mismatch between optimistic clinical expectations and real life. The chapters cover the struggle of facing up to long-term effects, the dread of recurrence, effects of cancer on relationships and work, and more detailed interviews with a nurse and three doctors as well as a separate chapter on the experience after treatment with male cancers. The book is clearly structured and written, with excellent summaries aimed at different constituencies. The analysis is incisive and frank: some of the deepest issues arise from an unconscious denial of our mortality when faced with the implications of cancer and, for patients, the dread of recurrence and having to undergo further painful and extended treatment when reserves of strength and resilience have already been sapped. So being disease-free is not

the same as being free of disease in an emotional and psychological sense. The messages of this book could not be more important for our understanding of living with cancer, so it should be widely read and discussed.

■ Care for the Soul

Rudolf Steiner, edited by Harold Haas

Rudolf Steiner Press 2020, 132 pp., £12.99, p/b.

Whenever I read Steiner - whether on bees, agriculture or even the electrification of the early 1920s in relation to the current rollout of 5G - I am struck by his prescience with respect to many contemporary challenges. This book selects and comments on his writings as a possible basis for a psychotherapy founded on anthroposophy - a 'science of the spirit' based on his own perception and understanding as well as the development of imagination, inspiration and intuition. Steiner was an inheritor of German idealism as well as the scientific work of Goethe, but with a highly developed spiritual perception as well as philosophical understanding of the limitations - still present - of a scientific outlook where 'only the ordinary mind exists, and this in turn is entirely dependent on our bodily organs.' (p. 27) Steiner goes beyond this to what he calls 'beholding consciousness' (c.f. witness), and awareness rooted in the world of spirit and enabling him to understand that the activity of the brain is in fact instrumentally that of the spirit (p. 121). Science as presently constituted is incapable of 'delving into an intrinsically inward realm of soul.' (p. 58)

Steiner recommends methods of meditation and contemplation that do not call upon faculty of memory or input from sense perceptions. These practices develop 'imaginative consciousness' while training the will and developing the feeling life along lines already practised by Goethe, eventually leading to supersensible cognition. The soul needs to undertake what he calls self-strengthening to achieve a spiritual vision of itself from within as a creative entity. Here a certain courage is called for in overcoming a fear of the void and realising the fullness of emptiness which is in fact the fullness of spirit that we intrinsically are. We exist on a spectrum of inwardness and outwardness, and our task is to become more intentionally aware of and oriented towards the underlying spiritual nature of reality.

■ The Art of Breathing

Dr Danny Penman

HarperCollins 2020, 119 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This simple, lucid and beautifully presented book is a straightforward introduction to mindful breathing and living, asking how aware we are of the 22,000 breaths we take every day. Danny is co-author of a bestselling book on mindfulness as well as an award-winning journalist and meditation teacher. Here he distils the essence in simple explanations and exercises; these are set out in simple circles with one leading to the next and creating a necessary pause. He shows the reader how relaxation and peace of mind are always within our reach through awareness of breathing and its well-known benefits. He gives a couple of unusual exercises in mindfully eating fruit and an outdoor 'scavenger' meditation based on our natural curiosity. The direct style and short paragraphs make the book eminently digestible and practical, a mindful reminder of what many know already but which is so easily forgotten in moments of unawareness.

PHILOSOPHY-SPIRITUALITY

■ In Search of the Soul

John Cottingham

Princeton 2020, 174 pp., £18.99, p/b.

This wide-ranging and well-written book looks at a variety of meanings associated with the soul, a concept that has largely gone out of fashion in modern philosophy, psychology and neuroscience with the rise of materialistic theories of mind. However, there are many other philosophical associations with the word that are examined here in terms of soul making, meaning, value and growth. The title chapters are indicative: humanity in quest of the soul, the evolution of the soul, soul, science and subjectivity, the partly hidden soul, and the soul and the transcendent. This last theme brings up the search for a deeper identity, but for the author this is more in terms of a 'hospitable' theistic framework than an investigation of the nature and implications of mystical experience. For him, theism is a more plausible 'fundamental framework of interpretation' than materialism when it comes to explaining consciousness. He points out that these pictures are not empirical hypotheses to be tested against evidence but rather the backdrop for any possible hypotheses - and this includes the view espoused by scientism.

At one level, soul language is about moral integration and fulfilment, ripening and meaning, soul as opposed to 'the' soul in a traditional metaphysical and immaterial sense. Here the author, like all philosophers unfamiliar with the psychical and mystical, is at a loss in attempting to connect the mechanistically material with the immaterial when restricted to the notion of a purely physical rather than subtle or light bodies. He also assumes that modern neuroscience has disproved this metaphysical soul and is evidently unacquainted with the vast experiential literature indicating the contrary. Interestingly, his analysis of the 'ratiocentric' Descartes is trialistic rather than dualistic: not only as physical, biological beings and conscious, thinking, concept-using beings, but also with sensory experience as a distinctive phenomenon that cannot be attributed to either body or mind. Cottingham rejects the thesis that consciousness is an illusion, regarding the complex semantic life world as irreducible, even if underpinned by ultimately physical mechanisms. However, theism posits 'a source or ground of all being that is somehow *mind-like*: consciousness is taken to be at the heart of reality.' (p. 83) The author realises that this is not a provable assertion but advances it as a plausible one (p. 99).

The fourth chapter is devoted to a more psychoanalytical view drawing on Freud and Jung and looking at the cognitive unconscious and the archaeology of belief. The author identifies a deep longing for wholeness and relationship in the human condition, which for him is the soul's yearning for God and a sense of infinite good and beauty. This is where transcendence comes in, but attributively rather than in a supernatural sense and indicating a grasping after meaning and value. I agree that the term supernatural is unhelpful although I would not go so far as to deny the existence of an independent spiritual realm. I appreciated Malebranche's idea of God as infinite and universal being, and also Moltmann's notion of the Spirit indwelling creatures - so both transcendent and immanent, with the human as microcosm or a spark of the divine. Here it would have been helpful to bring in actual experiences of the light, rather than referring to it in an abstract sense. Certainly poetry such as Wordsworth can help, but there is something missing here in terms of connection. This arises from a neglect of the intermediary realm between the physical and the divine as described by visionaries such as Swedenborg and reflects a tension between the persuasiveness

of physicalism and the subjective acceptance of a transcendent notion of God.

■ Medieval Philosophy

Peter Adamson

Oxford 2019, 637 pp., £25, h/b.

This is the fourth volume in the Oxford series 'a history of philosophy without any gaps', following on from books on classical philosophy, philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds and philosophy in the Islamic world - then the next in the series on Indian philosophy will be reviewed in PE 133. It is a staggering philosophical achievement by a single individual (though he does have a collaborator for the Indian volume) and certainly lives up to the series title, showing up considerable gaps in such classic treatments as Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, which I read in the summer of 1973. Moreover, the clarity of the animated text is further enhanced by the author's humour, bringing a light touch to complex matters. One example is the old joke that asks what Alexander the Great and Winnie the Pooh have in common - the answer is their middle name. And in describing the seduction of Heloise by Peter Abelard ('so eminent in logic that he alone was thought to converse with Aristotle') by becoming her teacher, he comments, I imagine ironically, 'of course, even today it remains true that skill in philosophy is a sure path to romantic success.'

The volume chronologically covers 600 years in 78 short chapters, with the second and third parts devoted to the 13th and 14th centuries. The author amply demonstrates the range and sophistication of mediaeval philosophers and mystics while highlighting perennial themes treated in individual chapters: the existence and knowledge of God, human freedom, immaterial souls, epistemology, science, logic, metaphysics, ethics and even mediaeval theories of law and economics. All the great figures appear in the book, along with many I had never heard of such as Peter Olivi, Gilbert of Poitiers, Robert Kilwardby, Henry of Ghent and Marsilius of Padua. It was also refreshing to see fair-minded treatment of major women mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, Julian of Norwich and the remarkable Marguerite Porete, burned at the stake for heresy in 1310 on account of her work *The Mirror of Simple, Annihilated Souls and Those Who Only Remain in Will and Desire of Love*. Adamson remarks that, 'like Socrates, she was executed after

courageously refusing to recant her convictions' involving going beyond virtue to mystical union in Love, using the will to abandon the will. This volume will surely attain classic status, and can be read either sequentially or consulted as a detailed encyclopaedia of mediaeval philosophy and its variegated personalities.

■ The World Philosophy Made

Scott Soames

Princeton 2019, 439 pp., £25, h/b.

This book is an erudite riposte to the accusation that philosophy has little practical relevance. In a sweeping narrative beginning with the Greeks, the author shows how philosophy has in fact laid 'the conceptual foundations for advances in theoretical knowledge and in advancing the systematic study of ethics, political philosophy, and human well-being.' In this sense, philosophy is a partner in a wide range of disciplines that draw on philosophical ideas, whether they are aware of this or not. In itemising the ancient Greek contribution, he points to various concepts such as truth, proof, definition, matter, mind, motion and causation that form the basis of scientific thinking, along with the importance of basing beliefs on evidence and argument rather than on authority. While explaining these developments, the author introduces the reader into some of the necessary technicalities involved. The book proceeds with mediaeval philosophy - the truce between faith and reason - before examining the origins of modern science and the emergence in the 18th-century of 'free societies, free markets and free people.' He points out that many leading figures were scientists as well as philosophers, such as Newton and Leibniz, while Adam Smith, best known for his contributions to economics, was in fact a professor of moral philosophy.

The remaining chapters analyse in detail the contributions of philosophers to a wide range of disciplines: logic, mathematics, computation, language, cognitive science, physics, justice, law and morality. The ideas of leading thinkers are critically exposed in relation to the various disciplines covered. There is a particularly good discussion of John Rawls' theory of justice and the lesser-known work of Gerald Gaus on the tyranny of the ideal. The final chapter returns to the themes of virtue, happiness and meaning in the face of death, which the author defines as the one of the twin aims of Western philosophy along with rational enquiry. The challenge here is to 'reconceptualise

traditional understandings of virtue and happiness to accommodate our growing scientific knowledge of human nature' - here the author accepts the naturalistic assumption that death is extinction, and therefore confines his perspective accordingly while nobly promoting the broadening and deepening of our commitment to people and things we most value. Continental philosophy is notably absent from the author's coverage, including existentialism, but this is not unusual in the American and British empirical tradition. The work of Frederick Copleston is referenced, but not Russell's *History of Western Philosophy* nor, unsurprisingly, Richard Tarnas' *Passion of the Western Mind*. And although there is a chapter on philosophy and physics, there is scant reference to David Bohm and the important work of Eddington, Schrödinger, Jeans and Whitehead. Having said this, the work is nonetheless magisterial in its scope and depth, as such constituting an important addition to the literature on the history of philosophy.

■ The Greater and Lesser Worlds of Robert Fludd

Joscelyn Godwin

Inner Traditions 2019, 264 pp., large format h/b, \$40.

Joscelyn Godwin is a musicologist and historian of ideas who taught at Colgate University for 45 years and is the author of a number of authoritative books on esotericism, including *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth*. Here he provides a magnificent and surely definitive illustrated volume on the work of Dr Robert Fludd (1574-1637). He describes him not only as a physician but also a Christian hermeticist, Rosicrucian, alchemist, astrologer, musician and inventor, giving a broad outline of his life and work in the first chapter. Subtitled 'Macrocosm, Microcosm and Medicine', the work moves through Fludd's encyclopaedic works on these topics and also includes sections on divination, Kabbalah, meteorology and the relationship between multiple levels of existence. The illustrations are quite extraordinary in their elaborate detail and give a visual representation of Fludd's world and understanding, with expert commentary by the author. There are illustrations on optics and perspective, how to draw the eye and cross the river underwater with a breathing tube; also an extraordinary musical water clock. The diagrams and drawings of man

as microcosm also explain our levels of understanding from the senses to intelligence accessing the divine. On page 143 there is an extraordinary depiction of the levels of sense, reason, intellect and nous (*mens*) with corresponding sensible, imaginal and intellectual/spiritual worlds and on page 149 the 'ladder of ascent' through these levels and culminating in the Word or Logos. As a musician, Fludd also depicts the world as a great monochord (pp. 196-7). As such, this remarkable study gives the reader not only verbal but also visual access to the mind of a genius in his era.

■ A Man to Match his Mountains

Ecknath Easwaran

Blue Mountain Centre of Meditation, 1984, 240 pp., no price given.

I don't imagine you have ever heard of Badshah Khan (1890-1988), the non-violent Pathan soldier of Islam – I certainly had not until my neighbour gave me this extraordinary book to read. I already had some books by the author – editions of Indian Scriptures, but this was completely new and totally mesmerising. Known as the Frontier Gandhi, Badshah Khan began as an educator with a mission to rescue his people from tyranny and create for them a world of freedom. As a humble man of God, he dedicated his life to this cause, spending nearly 30 years in prison - 15 of them under Britain - during his long life 'in the school of suffering' whereby his spirit was refined in this fire and strengthened in *satyagraha* (soul-force), even though he often lost up to 50 pounds through deprivation. His Pathan people were known as warriors and were historically caught in vicious cycles of revenge (*badal*), which makes it all the more incredible that Khan was able to recruit and train a non-violent army of 100,000 Pathans. As Gandhi himself observed, you need a warrior spirit in order for your nonviolence to come from strength and courage.

The British campaign of repression in his homeland was brutal in the extreme, involving shooting, beating and sacking whole villages. For them, Khan was a rebellious instigator of sedition who had to be contained by any means available. For Gandhi and his people, he was an inspiration, a man surrendered to the will of God and constantly acting out of love. Those who joined him took a solemn oath of refraining from violence and revenge, of forgiveness and service, of simplicity and virtue, devoting two hours a day to social work. At a time

when Islam is still associated in public perception with militant violence, the example of Badshah Khan is inspirational and derived explicitly from the Prophet and his 'weapons' of patience and righteousness: 'no power on earth can stand against it.' Khan's troops at Kissa Khani Bazaar simply came forward with their breasts bared and exposed themselves to British fire from 11 until 5 in the evening - a staggering demonstration of courage and sacrifice, as well as of the inner eradication of anger. The book also describes Khan's time spent with Gandhi, who regarded him as embodying the true spirit of Islam in terms of submission to God. They both opposed partition, and their forecast of continued division proved to be true. Their joint legacy is that nonviolence as love in action can indeed be truly transformative but that it requires a rigorous and disciplined inner process to develop that unconquerable spirit they both demonstrated. The challenge of the book was well put in the New Yorker review with the observation that 'by his example Khan asks us what we ourselves, as individuals made from the same stuff as he, are doing to shape history.'

■ The Meaning of Travel

Emily Thomas

Oxford 2020, 245 pp., £14.99, h/b.

Subtitled rather simply 'philosophers abroad', this is a delightful and engaging book about the deeper meaning of travel from the 16th century to the present day. It is framed by the author's journey to Alaska from Groningen in the Netherlands, where she had been studying, but also at each end of the book, by quirky and entertaining historical quotations related to travelling well and returning home. The immediate impression of travel is an encounter with the unfamiliar, with otherness. The age of discovery and then Empire began in the very late 15th century, captured in maps tend to put the the originating country at the centre. The author uses the lives of such figures as Francis Bacon, Descartes and Locke (who possessed 200 travel books) to raise philosophical issues, for instance the contrast between the last two philosophers with respect to innate ideas. The rise of science and the incorporation of the Royal Society had a considerable impact on approaches to travel. The chapter on the Grand Tour undertaken by young gentlemen of means from 1670 onwards is particularly fascinating (my own great grandfather undertook

this from 1841-1843). Adam Smith's phrase referring to 'the most frivolous dissipation' on the Tour is not without foundation, not only in terms of drinking and gambling, but also sexual pleasure that not infrequently led to sexually-transmitted diseases. The author quotes some instructive guidance given by Newton to a young fellow embarking on a journey, and describes the experiences of Rousseau as well as the tourist initiatives undertaken by Thomas Cook from 1841. Missing from the discussion is any mention of pilgrimage, which goes back much further and could have informed the treatment of the emergence of tourism.

A chapter on travel writing draws on Thomas More's *Utopia* and *Blazing World* by Margaret Cavendish (Duchess of Newcastle) who was by all accounts a remarkable and colourful character. The author shows how Henry More's philosophy of space introduced a new understanding of infinite in nature, represented by mountains and oceans – 'aesthetics of the infinite'. Edmund Burke's 1757 book on the sublime and the beautiful provides the context for a discussion of these concepts, also applied respectively to men and women, and leading in to a consideration of whether travel is a male concept. Emerson and Thoreau furnish the background for a chapter on solitude and wilderness philosophy with some beautiful extracts and reflections. A new issue currently arising is the ethics of doom tourism, where, paradoxically, the process of deterioration is exacerbated by tourists themselves – 'amazing places to visit before they vanish.' Other writers who could have been mentioned in the course of the book are Goethe (*The Italian Journey*), Alfred Russel Wallace and his collection of specimens from South America and Borneo, and the fashion for Alpine walking reading parties described by Sir Leslie Stephen in the 1860s. These, however, are minor quibbles in relation to a highly enjoyable and stimulating read – definitely a good book to take with you on your travels.

■ The Kentigern Way

Stephen G. Wright

Wild Goose Publications 2019, 143 pp., £8.99, p/b.

Stephen Wright has run the Sacred Space Foundation in Cumbria for many years, and here he provides a historical account of St Kentigern – aka St Mungo, the patron saint of Glasgow – within the context of

the Christianity that was emerging in Britain in the sixth century. The first part describes his life and the way it has been depicted in the form of archetypal hagiography that buys into the 'great man theory', with its corresponding invisible woman, in this instance his mother Teneu, who encountered many patriarchal ordeals in her own life. The background itself is important in evoking the contrasts between indigenous plurality and centralised Roman authority, decided in favour of the latter at the Synod of Whitby in 664. Stephen warns, however, against romanticising Kentigern and Celtic Christianity on this account. If one takes a 'mythos' rather than a more literal 'logos' approach to his story, one can recognise essential features of the human condition, which Stephen elaborates in terms of soul nourishment, soul friends, soul communities and soul work enabling and underpinning an engaged, prophetic and compassionate spirituality that we ourselves can also embody (p. 66 ff.).

A chapter by Lesley Orr powerfully evokes the relevance of Teneu to women's spirituality today as one who knew how to say no and courageously stand her ground, repudiating the expectation of cooperative submission. The second part reflects on the nature of pilgrimage as a challenge to shift 'our perception of self, of our relationship with the Beloved and the world' and where the outer journey takes us more deeply inwards. Stephen gives valuable practical and spiritual resources, with questions to ponder on the way. He then describes the route in more detail, recommending places to pause to consider questions that arise with the symbolism of, say, water, trees or bridges. A real gem.

■ The Mystical Accord

James Tunney

Amazon 2019, 173pp., £9.99, p/b.

The author of this penetrating book has an academic background in international law, but moved on from this field to focus on artistic and spiritual development as a painter and writer. The first 40 pages give an excellent description of the nature of mysticism, leading up to his idea of the mystical accord with links to the heart (Coeur/core), harmony and the law. The central premise is that 'there is a spirit in all of us. Spiritual consciousness is critical. Consciousness is fundamental, pre-existing, permanent and not emergent', but there is a disciplined

process of focusing our attention, especially in the time of 'materialism, mechanism, scientism, technocracy and intoxication.' (p. 41) The rest of the book is structured in terms of lines, sutras, haikus, aphorisms, proverbs and quotes, which makes the content direct and dense. The introduction ends with a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose influence is apparent in the text (e.g. 'To heal, be holy, be whole, be holistic and integrated wholly'). The chapters then unfold the overall argument in terms of the themes of spiritual evolution, the nature of the self, knowing, distraction and attraction, transcendence and the numinous. Here are a few illustrative lines to convey the flavour of a book that should be read and reflected on a few pages at a time:

Experience takes precedence over opinion of an 'expert.'

Experts they have no experience of the subject of expertise.

Experiments cannot expect to explain all experience.

The experience of the highest things is beyond experience.

The fondest, great treasures are beyond measure, beware the measurers.....

God is a human word wielding more power than yielding meaning.....

Love is the force of the universe that forms food for the spirit.

■ The Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ According to the Four Gospels

Rainbow Chang

Resource Publications 2020, 72 pp., £9, p/b.

Endorsed by both Rowan Williams and my old friend David Conner, Dean of Windsor, this is a poetic meditation on the events of Easter week, during which I am writing this review. The author studied theology at Oxford and also has a background in theatre. The text consists of prayers and invocations, haikus and longer poetic passages that speak directly to the reader as a fellow pilgrim on the path of life from an orthodox Anglican viewpoint evoking in me many memories of Holy Communion taken in different sacred places. The blood is seen as cleansing power and love, while the human pathos of suffering and departure is wistfully expressed. Here is an example of a potent haiku:

Pilate Yeshua face to face

Shouting, tension, politics, power, the human drama

He asked what is truth

And later on:

Only, only in death life remains,

Only, only in love thorn appears....

With the resurrection comes a song of the archangels Michael and Gabriel: 'Sing a new song with joy, walk no more but dance, oh ye whom He loves' and the plea to Jesus to 'lead us out of unexamined life with light' then in Ascension Song 4 – 'infinite in finite, finite in infinite/form in formless, formless in form'. This is overall a very powerful evocation and invocation that will speak especially to Christians but also more widely in a spiritually transformative sense, and I look forward to seeing this on stage and perhaps set to music.

■ Christ Power and Earth Wisdom

Marko Pogacnik

Clairview 2019 (1999), 283 pp., £12.99, p/b.

The author is best known for his carved 'cosmograms' and his work on sacred landscape. Here he describes his intuitive and scholarly search for what he calls the Fifth Gospel expressing the true Gnostic teaching of Christ beyond the harnessing of his words to create the institution of the Church. He draws not only on the canonical gospels but also on the Gospel of Thomas, describing how he senses an etheric layer to the text, and where this is interrupted. An important element of the book is messages ostensibly received from the Archangel Michael by his daughter Ana, one of which gives a powerful explanation of Love as the most direct and concentrated power equated with Life, just as Beinsa Douno also explains. The author sees the message of Christ as an important evolutionary transition, emphasising the importance of the integration of opposites described in Thomas as well as our individual responsibility within the larger scheme of things. The text is accompanied by some powerful symbolic line drawings and descriptions of significant experiences in places such as Chartres and San Marco in Venice. Our evolution is related to that of the Earth and we should seek relationships with Nature in our own localities. One chapter at the end provides an illuminating commentary on many sayings of Jesus as applied to our own spiritual development. As the title suggests, the unique feature of this book is bringing together Christ Power and Wisdom.

PSYCHOLOGY-CONSCIOUSNESS STUDIES

■ Dream Symbols of the Individuation Process

C.G. Jung, edited by Suzanne Giezer

Princeton 2019, 349 pp., £34, h/b.

This book is the second in the Philemon series after the initial volume of lectures on the history of modern psychology delivered at ETH Zurich. It presents a series of 11 seminars delivered in English in 1936 and 1937 on Bailey Island, Maine and in New York City, making these available for the first time. The subject is a sequence of dreams by the Nobel prize-winning physicist Wolfgang Pauli, with whom Jung worked clinically, and also on the relationship between psychology and physics. Needless to say, the identity of the dreamer only emerged much later, but the reader gains a good understanding of his brilliant one-sidedness, with his feelings as a shadow function. In a letter, Pauli notes that it is easier for him to achieve success in academia than with women, while 'for Mr Jung the opposite is the case' and in fact Jung initially recommended that he was treated by a woman, Erna Rosenbaum. It is fascinating to see how the mandala as an expression of the archetype of wholeness emerges in this sequence, reflecting the healing process.

As one might expect, Jung's range of cultural reference is breathtaking. He presents key elements of his own approach as well as commenting on the mass psychology of the period and illustrating his theories with examples drawn from many spiritual traditions. Interestingly, Pauli compares himself not only with Kepler but also with the esoteric philosopher Robert Fludd. Then as now, our conscious processes are 'surrounded by the great sea of the unconscious' far out in the ocean and surrounded by an intensity of darkness. Jung notes that the alchemical journey entails a refining transformation into a more precious substance (lead into gold, darkness into light). In commenting on the Dionysian element within Christianity, he observes that there is much more moral freedom within the Carnival, and that Catholics have an escape clause in confession that is not present in Protestantism. These rich and erudite seminars are a reminder that we are all on a journey towards wholeness, but have to remain wary of our own unconsciousness in relation to shadow elements projected as evil onto others. And it is no different now from the time of the

Great War when 'everybody served it but nobody wanted it.' The difference from mediaeval times is that we no longer have religion to shield us from these harsh insights.

■ A Burst of Conscious Light

Dr Andrew Sullivan

Park Street Press 2019, 210 pp., £10.65, p/b.

The author is a medical doctor with a background in physics who is a leading scientific expert on the Shroud of Turin. The title refers to his hypothesis that the imprint on the Shroud was created by a directional burst of conscious light, which he then contextualises in relation to the spiritual mystical light experienced in NDEs and which is perhaps the essence of consciousness, as arguably also understood by many of the leading 20th-century physicists. He takes the view that the Shroud does indeed manifest the imprint of Jesus Christ as a pre-eminent being of light in a spiritual sense. He gives a lot of detail on the Shroud, which readers will have to assess for themselves as there is inevitably a speculative as well as an empirical angle. He regards mind and matter as part of a continuum and consciousness as irreducible to artificial intelligence since it entails awareness and understanding, not simply information. It is this awareness that he regards as the fundamental ground of all existence that is then unfolded as separation in time.

For the author, empathy is the clue for undoing the separation between subject and object that originally emerged from nothingness. Mystical experience of the light enables direct apprehension not only of truth and love, but also of order, peace and unity. Drawing on the work of Andrei Linde and others, the author suggests that 'we as conscious beings are both the creators of the "now" and of time itself', noting that 'if time is a property of consciousness, then consciousness could not be created by or in time.' (p. 130, pp. 146 ff.) This is where his philosophy of free will comes in as the actualisation of a potential option with parallels to the quantum wave collapse. (p. 154) In the epilogue, 'Natural versus Artificial', the author reiterates his conviction that the mind cannot be a product of the brain and criticises the misguided materialistic vision of uploading consciousness into machines as 'a deadly and ill-informed denial of our true nature as human beings.' The stakes are high, and this book makes an original contribution to the question of the spiritual nature of the human being.

■ Sick Souls, Healthy Minds

John Kaag

Princeton 2020, 209 pp., £18.99, h/b.

Dramatically subtitled 'how William James can save your life', this book is a blend of personal experience and formal philosophical thought in considering and relating James's philosophy with his life (and that of the author), showing the intimate connection between the two exemplified, for instance, in James's 1895 lecture "Is Life Worth Living?" - a question that James himself had wrestled with. The chapters consider a range of themes: determinism and despair, freedom and life, psychology and the healthy mind, consciousness and transcendence, truth and consequences, wonder and hope. James himself was what he called a sick soul, but he sought to express himself as a healthy mind and was tortured by the conundrum of free will, drawing on his own experience on the one hand and his growing knowledge of causation in psychology on the other, especially while he was writing his seminal *Principles of Psychology* published in 1890. A key moment came with his reading of Charles Renouvier's essay on liberty, as a result of which James proclaimed that his first act of free will would be to believe in it - here one can see an expression of his later pragmatism, also articulated in his 1896 lecture on *The Will to Believe*.

One sees the same agonising - paralysis by analysis - in his initial approach to his future wife Alice and the author remarks that his relationship with money and fame bordered on the dysfunctional: 'there was always a lot of both, but never enough of either.' He has interesting reflections on habit and what we now call biofeedback as well as on the mind-body problem and the limitations of a purely objective, analytical approach to the study of human consciousness. Interestingly, when re-reading his own work on the stream of consciousness, James scrawls in the margin the phrase 'The Witness', bringing to mind parable in the Upanishads about the two birds in one tree. James always felt that action was more important than verbal formulation and that 'we should not divorce philosophy from the realities of life' - hence his many highly readable general lectures which I have on my shelves. For him, free will enables us to improve life, and this can be done all the more vigorously with zest. There is a nice story about Gertrude Stein, one of his philosophy students, who found herself entirely uninterested in taking the exam. She wrote: "Dear Professor James, I'm so sorry, really I do not

feel a bit like an examination paper in philosophy today", so she got up and walked out. James nevertheless gave her a good mark, writing, "Dear Miss Stein, I understand perfectly how you feel. I often feel like that myself." An engaging book, especially for William James fans like myself.

■ Hidden Truth Revealed

Murray (Nick) Nicholls (SMN)

Self-published 2020, 262 pp.,

no price given

(murraynicholls@mypostoffice.co.uk)

This is the fourth in Nick's series of books where each one takes the reader further up the spiral of understanding the relationship between different dimensions and what Nick calls the mechanics of the universe, which begin with creative thought and focused intention/desire manifesting in the physical, as Walter Russell and others have also pointed out - thought acts as a blueprint. It is a personal journey that has been going on for the last 35 years where the elements of the jigsaw puzzle of life become more clearly understood along with the role of dreams and synchronistic confirmations on the path (Nick always asks for three). Past life connections are interwoven into the narrative, including some with his immediate family, connections with World War I and Pearl Harbour, and multi-dimensional interactions with a close friend with whom he has attended our retreats in Cathar country over the past few years. This element is also intertwined with the work of Lars Muhl and his 'O' Manuscript. Later incidents often throw further light on previous experiences to enable a deeper understanding of life patterns and relationships.

It is evident that Nick's communications and poems are coming from a deeper dimension, energies collectively representing his higher self. These convey a profound philosophy with an emphasis on Oneness and the Now - hence also on the centrality of Love and focusing on the positive (e.g. p. 211) rather than being caught up in the negative. This represents Love of Oneness from which we emerge to which we return 'think of love and love will prevail.' One symbolic example is the role of the figure 313 involving a number of synchronicities but also the idea of the one within the three (on the last day of the trip, 3/13 - 13 March - he is assigned room 313 in his hotel). Rather than praying to God, Nick recommends listening to God, to our higher intuitive guidance.

We need to pay attention and, as Krishnamurti recommended, remain aware of when we are not aware. As a whole, the book shows how Nick's life has formed a bridge of understanding between spiritual and material dimensions, as he amply documents in these pages. He has realised consciously that he is part of that ONENESS, that his thoughts affect and modify that ONENESS and that that same ONENESS responds to his questions. All this makes the book a fascinating life study based on essential principles that readers can apply to understanding their own lives.

■ Experiences from the Threshold and Beyond Understood through Anthroposophy

Are Thoresen

Temple Lodge 2020, 141 pp.,

£14.99, p/b.

Are Thoresen is a Norwegian holistic vet who has used the framework ideas of Rudolf Steiner to interpret his many subtle experiences of thresholds and entities in the spiritual world. He laments our cultural spiritual hyposensitivity as we have become submerged in materialistic concerns to the extent of denying the very existence of other dimensions, which he sees as a sure sign of inevitable disintegration. He gives clear definitions of Steiner's various terms, including the elements of the human being culminating in the I aligned in service and love with Christ consciousness so as to handle the adversarial energies of Lucifer and Ahriman. We need to learn how to use imagination, inspiration and intuition as well as developing our spiritual senses, as Steiner recommended, in order to navigate safely in these other realms. In this context, the author warns against indiscriminate use of psychedelics that open up these worlds without the experiencer being adequately prepared to handle them. He tells his detailed story chronologically, explaining key concepts along the way in a technical manner - this is not for the fainthearted. There is then a section on spiritual training, also involving the development of the 12 spiritual senses, and the further reflection on the significance of the hexagon. Overall, this book is most valuable and accessible as a spiritual manual for those already familiar with Steiner's terminology.

■ The Invisible Ocean

George Adamski (edited by Gerard Aartsen)

BGA Publications, 2019, 108 pp.,
no price given.

George Adamski was a spiritual researcher active from the 1930s, who was also an early investigator of UFOs. The title is taken from a 1932 essay reprinted here, using the analogy of the ocean for divine substance and our movement within it towards the light if we align with our higher self. One of his most interesting insights is that superconsciousness corresponds to supersensitivity as everything registers within it, as was the case with Beinsa Douno (Peter Deunov): transformation is achieved through self-control of thought. There are interesting clippings concerning Adamski's Royal Order of Tibet Centre in Laguna Beach, and some suggestion that his sacramental production of wine was one way of circumventing the prohibition. The editor shows how Adamski's thought is reflected in developments in systems science, for instance in the work of Ervin Laszlo. There is also a full bibliography showing the extent of his work.

■ Priorities for a Planet in Transition

Gerard Aartsen

BGA Publications 2017, 200 pp.,
no price given, p/b.

This book is related to the one above in following up the work of George Adamski, but also draws on Benjamin Creme and contains numerous photographs of UFOs. However, the existence of extraterrestrial beings is not the main point, but rather the messages received about the principles on which they base their own social and economic systems. Science without love and moral principles is a recipe for self-destruction. On Earth many people have lost sight of the oneness of life and the ethical implications of this state of affairs (the virus is a brutal reminder). Nor can we flout universal and natural laws with impunity. The oneness of life leads to a recognition of mutual interdependence and the need for truth, fairness, sharing, cooperation and justice. Freedom is restrained for the common good, and people work from love in order to serve. All this is strikingly similar to the political philosophy of Beinsa Douno where love is life serving the whole. One contact (p. 132) explained that there are three principal branches of science: physical or material, social, and, most importantly spiritual, 'which covers

the relationship between humans and the great creative power and infinite intelligence which pervades and controls all nature.' (p. 132) It goes without saying that this spiritual science is fundamental, providing the basis and framework for the others. All this leads to a new definition of exopolitics as 'people from other planets showing humanity alternative, saner ways of organising society, without imposing their views.' (p. 164) The appearance of a world teacher (Maitreya) hinted at by Benjamin Creme over many decades risks renewed dependency, when in fact all we need to do is to apply perennial spiritual principles to the way we organise life on earth. For Douno, these were love, wisdom, truth, justice and virtue or goodness - surely a sound basis on which to proceed. Besides, in renouncing the title for himself, Krishnamurti stated in 1929 that Douno was the world teacher.

■ Personality Survives Death

Florence Barrett

White Crow Books 2020, 179 pp.,
£12.99, p/b.

Sir William Barrett FRS (1844-1925) was a physicist who initiated the founding of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882 and was active in the field for 50 years. His wife was a prominent gynaecologist and in this book describes the outcome of 35 sittings with the renowned trance medium Gladys Osborne Leonard - the book was first published in 1938, and is not one that I had come across before despite having written a book about survival (I was familiar with *Deathbed Visions*). It contains a great deal of persuasive evidential material, including highly significant book tests with corresponding texts and page references. Some of the more personal material has been removed, and it is interesting that Sir William said before he died that he thought that convincing evidence must be applicable only to oneself and must therefore be of a very intimate and personal character, probably trivial and only known to one person hence his belief that 'absolute proof could only be conveyed to one person - to others it would be second-hand evidence.' This reminded me of Freeman Dyson's introduction to *Extraordinary Knowing* by Elizabeth Lloyd Meyer where he describes the quite remarkable incident of the clairvoyant discovery of Lisby's daughter's harp while remarking that he was not obliged to believe anything extraordinary as this did not happen to him. I thought this disingenuous at the time, but Barrett's remark makes it more understandable.

There is plenty of highly significant circumstantial survival evidence described here, including some related to Barrett's own death and his continuing relationship with FWH Myers, but there is also valuable philosophical material and even an extensive discussion on the role of diet in relation to cancer, something not yet established at that time. Barrett sees the vital principle as belonging to the etheric rather than the physical, which is also a factor in the genesis of disease. He stresses the importance of cultivating the mind while in the physical and of living according to the law of love as a principle. He remarks that when communicating he cannot come through with his whole self and, interestingly, that after death the conscious and subconscious join 'to make a complete mind that knows and remembers everything'; however, the limitation of physical sphere communication means that 'only a portion of one's mind can function for the time being.' (p. 49) The epilogue notes how Barrett's memory and character came through the scripts where 'research on any subject meant to him exactness in method combined with an open mind, ready to accept only what is absolutely proven, irrespective of preconceived ideas' - and there is no doubt that we are dealing here with a first-rate intelligence. This is a classic book that repays careful study.

■ Diary of a Death Doula

Debra Diamond PhD

O Books (John Hunt) 2019, 207 pp.,
£11.99, p/b.

Subtitled '25 lessons the dying teach us about the afterlife', this is a remarkable book by a hospice death doula (with her role as a calming and peaceful presence) who is also a clairvoyant, and who previously worked on Wall Street. Her sensitivity enables her to perceive what is going on in the transition from the physical we call death and even to hold telepathic conversations with the patients. One key insight is that prolonged periods of sleep around the dying process represent preparatory inner work prior to departure, a retuning of consciousness to higher realms where we are connected to a much larger reality. The book is written within the cultural context of the scientific view of death as extinction, a view which turns out to be an illusion. I was struck by a quotation early in the book handed to the author by a nurse:

'If the body is ready and the soul isn't, you don't leave.'

'If the soul is ready and the body isn't, you don't leave.'

When the soul is ready and the body is ready, then you leave.'

The main part of the book consists of the 25 lessons, each drawn from a different encounter with a dying person. The author describes the physical background and experience as she settles in and tries to work out where the person is in the dying process. As in the books I reviewed in the main section, the lessons and insights are important for life as well as for a more profound understanding of the dying process as a transformational journey. The author sometimes perceives the pull towards a fullness of light and love as well as the supportive presence of deceased loved ones. People who have lived an intense spiritual life can manifest bright light in their auras at this point of transition. The key questions seem to relate to how well we lived, how well we loved and, at the end, how well we learned to let go. Spiritually (p. 179), the substance of the higher realms is love, 'the fabric woven into our air, the chain of life in heaven.' The absolute centrality of Love is always the final and crucial message of such inspiring books and one which we can sometimes forget, focused as we are principally on the physical.

■ The Blue Island

W.T. Stead – recorded by Estelle Stead

White Crow Books 2020, 81 pp., £8.99, p/b.

This is a reprint of a classic book first published in 1922, with a foreword by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. W.T. Stead was a journalist and author who died on the Titanic and ostensibly communicated within a few days of this disaster. He had already written about messages from the other side, so was more familiar than most when he suddenly passed over with hundreds of bewildered fellow passengers. He is given some instructions about how to communicate, and the book consists of a series of instructive short messages about his new state and surroundings as well as activities corresponding to the interests of those who have just arrived. There is a gradual discarding of earthly habits and superficial identity. One of the interesting points about communication is the visualisation of the face as 'the part they would recognise me by' and the impressing of thoughts on the mind of the medium: 'I stood by the most sensitive present, and spoke and concentrated my mind on a short sentence, and repeated it with much emphasis and deliberation until I could hear part of its spoken by this person.' Stead tells us that through our character

we are mentally building up our subsequent condition when we pass over. He discusses the life review in terms of paying a bill, emphasising the centrality of reason and motive leading to a certain result, but always underpinned by the law of love. There are some important spiritual insights to be gleaned from this short work.

ECOLOGY/POLITICS

■ Exit from Hegemony

Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nexon

Oxford 2020, 280 pp., £25, h/b.

Subtitled 'the unravelling of the American global order', this is an astute and timely analysis of the decline of the US-led liberal international order, 'the American-led system of alliances, institutions, global governance that was developed after the Second World War.' In this context, a hegemony is a political community that uses its 'superior economic and military capabilities to exercise leadership.' The book argues that the liberal international order has in fact been unravelling for the last 15 years, and that the Trump presidency has simply seen an acceleration of this process in actually repudiating this order and fraternising with authoritarian leaders. The authors consider the American hegemonic system from a theoretical and historical perspective, highlighting the foreign policy tension between supporting democracy and free markets: this has quite frequently led to CIA-sponsored regime change interventions that undermine democracy but also support free-market dictators, all underpinned by the myth of manifest destiny.

The book provides a good model of the ecology of the international order in terms of architecture (rules, norms and values), and infrastructure (practices and relationships), which are bridged by international institutions with responsibility for economics, security and political relations - all this has given the US a significant geopolitical advantage, along with the US dollar as reserve currency. The following chapters analyse the ways in which hegemonic orders unravel, considering specifically what the authors call 'exit from above' where Russia and China are seeking to transform the international order, then 'exit from below' with the rise of new external patrons - think of China's Belt and Road Initiative as well as their investment in land in Africa; and finally 'exit from within' through

right-wing trans-nationalism and counter-order movements.

The overall trend is towards a multipolar order, with China and Russia both promoting new institutions and undermining the liberal international order with their reassertion of state control over information and criticism of human and political rights. Putin even wrote a long article in the FT last summer on the decline of liberalism. Now Trump himself is aiding and abetting the unravelling process by disrupting the architecture and infrastructure of US leadership, pitting allies against US interests in a zero-sum analysis. This the authors call 'exit made in America', based on narrow self-interest and representing 'geopolitical suicide' in terms of the existing order. The authors envisage a number of possible future orders, including the rise of China and a new Cold War, multipolarity based on sovereignty and non-interference without American liberal ordering, and globalised oligarchy and kleptocracy. Whatever the mix/outcome, there is certainly a major transformation underway in international order and the US 'will need to accommodate other powers to a much greater extent than it used to' in the absence of 'mystical American exceptionalism', which every president has tacitly assumed and used to justify US interventions, overt and covert. Missing from this power- and policy-centred analysis are the implications of localisation as a counter-move to globalisation, and also the political implications of environmental decline and climate instability; the first gives rise to small-scale decentralised ecologies of order, while the second is likely to intensify political instability, as we have already seen with the European refugee crisis.

■ Pro Truth

Gleb Tsipursky and Tim Ward

Changemaker Books (John Hunt) 2020, 271 pp., £13.99, p/b.

This is an important, timely and practical book about how to reverse the trend towards post-truth politics, fake news and viral deception. Its starting point is the Pro-Truth Pledge (www.protruthpledge.com) which sets out 12 principles for sharing, honouring and encouraging truth in public life. With backgrounds in behavioural science and communication, the authors define and dissect many cognitive and emotional syndromes that exist within all of us, at least to some extent. These include various forms

of cognitive bias and mental errors such as bias blind spot, confirmation bias, false consensus effect, illusory truth effect, single cause fallacy and backfire effect, where people simply defend their positions more vigorously when attacked. Then there are 10 forms of lies, including confabulation, deceptive hyperbole, 'glittering generality' and wilful ignorance, besides straightforward blatant lies. Finally, there is an extensive glossary with terms such as 'filter bubble' created by newsfeeds on social media and 'tribal epistemology' whereby we believe only our own side.

It will come as no surprise to the reader that the main case study here is Donald Trump, along with parallels involving, for instance, Putin and Brexit. Almost all politicians will apologise and recant if caught out by fact checking from mainstream media. Not Trump – he never retracts anything, and simply attacks the messenger or mainstream press, portraying himself as a victim of a witch hunt and maintaining that the press cannot be trusted. Interestingly, these tactics are correlated with a decline among Republicans of trust in mainstream media, even when its facts are manifestly correct. It turns out that if something is repeated often enough (this applied to the US government claiming that Saddam Hussein was involved in 9/11), people come to believe it. There is extensive coverage of role of online and social media, including an analysis of people's shifting adherence to genuine and fake news during the US 2016 election. We are all prone to manipulation unless we remain highly informed and constantly vigilant.

This whole process undermines trust and democracy, hence the proposal and adoption of the Pro-Truth Pledge, which has already been signed by a significant number of public figures, and will hopefully feature more prominently in the upcoming election. What the authors call 'rational communication' contains a lot of sound advice on how to engage constructively with those of a different persuasion by prioritising empathy over information and therefore engaging the psychological reality of the other. In this sense, collaborative truth-seeking is more strategic than debate and winning. Coming back to Trump, winning is for him the bottom line and any means is permissible. We can all learn how better to prioritise truth from the clear explanations and examples of this highly informative study by becoming more vigilant in our own analyses and interactions.

■ How the West was Lost

Ben Ryan

Hurst and Co 2019, 314 pp., £20, p/b.

Civilisational decline is a theme raised elsewhere in this issue in books by William Ophuls and John Reed. This stimulating analysis proposes a diagnosis of what the West is in terms of its positive moral purpose, how it was lost, and recommendations about how it can be re-gained. The author identifies three Christian and Enlightenment ideas as central: progress towards a utopian moral endpoint, Republican values of liberty, equality and fraternity (he calls this solidarity), and universalism – the idea that these values can be globalised. All these ideals have run up against challenges, for instance of excessive individualism or demands for total conformity in the name of liberal equality. In addition, the decline of official religion has removed another unifying factor, although we are still to some extent living off Christian moral capital. The crisis is that we have no truly shared set of collective values.

The second part looks in more detail at the fading of the European project, the loss of religious faith, the rise of nationalism and authoritarianism, the squeezed middle class, challenges of the rising generation in terms of employment and housing, and questions raised by migration, Islam and Western values. In the US, 'corporate America, in the name of freedom, is now running public life' (p. 117) without regard for inequality and in the face of a breakdown of American solidarity and the sense that we are all in it together. The right represents the business elite and the left the intellectual elite, while both are isolated from the majority. As the author points out, our economic model is now 'undermining the equality and solidarity that are needed to balance commitment to liberty' (p. 157) We are also losing intergenerational solidarity, not only in terms of economics, also of planetary ecological prospects.

The third part addresses our loss of confidence in our own myth, especially since 2008. We need to take into account the mind represented by ideals and purpose as well as the soul based on existential belonging. The author suggests a redemptive project based on environmental politics and a shared story of a cleaner, safer world; then a form of moral internationalism as a continuation of the commitment to universalism while balancing the demands of liberty and equality. The

final chapter discusses the crucial issue of restoring solidarity, the third value that has been overlooked at the expense of emphasising one of the first two. This is based on the idea of obligations: 'what is owed to people within society.' (p. 241) A key element is rebuilding civil society with an emphasis on the overall common good, and at this time the scope needs to be planetary with a real sense that we are all in it together – the environmental predicament is the key context here, inviting us to go beyond narrow nationalisms and a New World Order based on fear and control; this also involves seriously tackling inequality and a move towards stakeholder capitalism. Will all this be enough, even if implemented? My own view, articulated above in my review of *Priorities for a Planet in Transition* is that we need a deeper articulation and application of universal spiritual principles beyond techno-scientific ingenuity that brings together mind, heart and will in a common shared vision of mutual flourishing – as a reminder, these Deunov principles are Love (compassion), Wisdom, Truth, Justice and Virtue or Goodness.

■ The Populist Manifesto

Edited by Emmy Ecklundh and Andy Knott

Rowman and Littlefield 2020, 126 pp., £19.95, p/b.

Given the current prevalence of both left and right wing populism, this volume invites readers to stand back and provides a provocative conceptual analysis of the term that gives readers a much more refined understanding of the phenomenon. The title is somewhat misleading: a number of authors emphasise that populism is characterised in terms of logic or form rather than content. It is certainly closely connected with identity, and in a right-wing manifestation with ethno-nationalism at a time of 'hegemonic breakdown' of the neoliberal consensus. Populism arises at times of crisis and is always adversarial, most generally casting the people against the elite, which may be based on wealth or institutions (e.g. EU and Brexit). A chapter on populism as myth focuses on the leader as hero identifying and vanquishing the villain. However, conservatives tend to look backwards and the direction of polarised antagonism is downwards (think of the Mexican wall and the focus on borders) while progressives look forwards and their direction of antagonism is upwards to capitalism

and globalisation. Righteous anger is channelled into remedying perceived injustice in both instances. Another interesting almost archetypal frame is that of hurt, loss (often of control), betrayal and redemption. Reason and passion are present in all political discourse, although emotion is frequently belittled in one's opposition. The final chapters lean in the direction of an emerging left-wing environmental populism, bringing together form and content in a similar way to Naomi Klein. Neoliberalism has failed to address our environmental challenges, so some form of green new deal becomes a more realistic prospect, also representing inclusion and a concern for equality as well as a redefinition of work. An important and timely volume.

■ After #MeToo

Gerard Casey

Imprint Academic 2020, 258 pp.,
£14.95, p/b.

This book is a robust critical analysis of the #MeToo movement within the context of radical feminism by an emeritus professor of philosophy. It is a timely corrective to exaggerated claims associated with this movement, a criticism also articulated by a group of French women, who themselves were castigated for their intervention. The heart of the issue concerns two views of women: whether they are responsible moral agents or a collective of victims of sexual crimes by predatory males. This was the point made by the French women, that they can frequently just say no, although some cases are undoubtedly more inextricable and constitute an illegitimate use of power. The first chapter looks at feminism in general, before moving on to questions relating to women at work and the validity of the concept of patriarchy. Here the author points out that women now make up the majority of teachers and that a 50-50 ratio in every profession is neither necessarily logical or desirable. He makes a number of pertinent observations from a masculine point of view, showing that men often get the short straw – shorter lives, harsher treatment by courts, greater mortality from physical violence in war. The chapter on toxic masculinity shows the concept to be a caricature with respect to most men, while a shrill insistence on believing only the woman's report of a rape incident leads to a situation where accusation is tantamount to conviction and guilt, even though the law allows for

due process and a presumption of innocence until proved guilty. These reflections also apply to the tricky issue of consent, where rape has been transformed from a crime of violence to a violation of personal autonomy. The author shows how this concept is in practice unworkable and, more generally, how political correctness requires to be called into question, especially in university settings. He undoubtedly overstates his argument in a number of places, but this is useful in obliging readers to reassess their own position on these matters more critically.

■ Simplify

Bob Hillary (www.bobhillary.com)

Watkins 2020, 188 pp., £10.99, p/b.

This is a delightful and highly practical book by a man who experimented in living off-grid in a yurt and is appropriately subtitled 'how to stay sane in the world going mad.' A central part of his answer is slowing down and becoming aware of our connection with nature. He gives advice on downscaling, rewinding, simple food and unteaching yourself, then in the second part recommends 21 practices to help you simplify your life in terms of stillness, taking it easy, learning to breathe, dancing, doing what you love and practising gratitude. The third and fourth parts address being who you really are and walking your talk. I really enjoyed the author's down-to-earth tone and explanations of how we can all become Earth Warriors rather than worriers, living slowly enough to be fully present: 'a warrior does not rush' (c.f. Aristotle: 'a wise man is never in a hurry.') We all need to do the work, including that involving shadow and healing. We can create a new earth by stopping feeding the old one 'with our energy, our money, our fear, our taxes and our minds.' In this way, we can become part of a new caring generation that he calls Team Earth.

■ The Living Wisdom of Trees

Fred Hageneder

Watkins 2019, 255 pp., £16.99, h/b.

Fred Hageneder is a naturalist and harpist as well as being a co-founder of the Ancient Yew Group and the author of other books on trees. The introduction explains the extent of folklore on trees intertwined with the cycles of life and symbolically represented by the tree of life and the tree of knowledge. He discusses the historical importance of sacred groves and the importance of reaching a sustainable balance with the planet, where trees play a critical role.

Most of the book is devoted to and encyclopaedic coverage of 50 species describing natural features, individual symbolism, historical associations, practical uses, healing properties and observations from culture, myth and symbol. There are many fascinating details, for instance that the almond represents the white goddess because of its blossom, while the word can be traced etymologically to the Sumerian *ama ga* meaning Great Mother. And as Blackthorn had recently been in blossom, I consulted this entry and found that it symbolises the balance between light and darkness while its fruit is the sloe used in gin. A very useful and informative reference book. Fred will be speaking and playing at the postponed Mystics and Scientists conference.

GENERAL

■ Enchantment

Patrick Curry

Floris Books 2019, 150 pp., £20, p/b.

This is a delightful, not to say enchanting book about enchantment and the possibilities for wonder in modern life in an era increasingly characterised by disenchantment, as Max Weber formulated 100 years ago. Curry's thesis is that enchantment arises through an enhanced and receptive awareness of relationship and synchronistic connectedness in different contexts, and that it is central to a well-lived life. He begins by looking at the dynamics and range of enchantment; here he distinguishes it from Apollonian rational mastery as well as from Dionysian pleasure, regretting that the modern academy 'loves explanation more than wisdom, and method much more than direct encounter.' (p. 11) In the context of the book, a key role is played by metaphor and symbol.

The subsequent chapters look at enchantment in the context of love, art, religion, food and drink, learning and nature; then come specific chapters on disenchantment and technoscience, with a final reflection on enchantment as a way of life. The text is beautifully woven, with many magical excerpts and episodes from the author's wide reading and extensive experience. This has the effect of encouraging readers to reflect on and appreciate sources of and opportunities for enchantment in their own lives. Interestingly, the author sees mindfulness as a disenchantment of the fullness of Buddhism, and he describes an extraordinary 'interview' with Zen master Dainin Katagiri in 1970. The master tells him, 'no

questions, we just sit' whereupon the room begins to fill up with love until it was full, 'and I was in it and it was in me.' The master then opens his eyes and bows again while Patrick staggers to his feet and floats out of the door. The chapters on disenchantment and technoscience remind us that we must balance logos with mythos, calculation and control with creativity and openness, jealously guarding the quality of our attention from constant distraction. The book conveys a crucial reminder of what represents real quality of life.

■ Temenos Academy Review 22, 2019

Temenos Academy 2019, 254 pp., £10 plus £4 p & p UK – Stephen Overy, spo@temenos.myzen.co.uk)

Every year, the Temenos Academy Review provides a rich treasury of articles, poetry and book reviews inspired by its ten basic principles involving wisdom, spiritual vision and an understanding of tradition as continual renewal. In this issue there are two important articles on nature, one by John Carey on Natura as a goddess of mediaeval Christendom and another on Shakespeare and the unity of nature and humanity. Then there is also a translation of the beautiful and profound first Duino Elegy by Rilke and a classic lecture from 1975 by Philip Sherrard on W.B. Yeats and the search for tradition. For Network readers, perhaps the most interesting item is a wide-ranging interview with Rupert Sheldrake that includes his relationship with Father Bede Griffiths, reflections on matter and mind and artificial intelligence, new atheist meditators and the extended evolutionary synthesis including epigenetic inheritance.

■ Essentials

David Whyte

Many Rivers Press 2020, 119 pp., \$15, p/b – www.davidwhyte.com

David Whyte is one of the most powerful poets currently writing in the English language. I reviewed his last book of poems - *The Bell and the Blackbird* - as well as his *Consolations* in these pages. This book is slightly different, consisting as it does of prose and poems with commentaries to explain the context, and it is edited by his wife Gayle, who writes that his words 'create an opening for all of us to find our own way into a sense of ground and home in our bodies and experiences, while casting a larger horizon to move into our future all at once.' How do we inhabit our unique being in the course

of life, where we are bridges between the invisible and the visible, darkness and light, inner and outer? Some of the eloquent prose pieces towards the end plumb the depths of the human condition in terms of closeness, friendship, heartbreak and despair. David sees despair as 'a necessary seasonal state of repair, a temporary healing absence', which brings a different perspective, while heartbreak 'begins the moment we are asked to let go but cannot' - it is nevertheless we mature, 'and maybe the very essence of being human, or being on the journey from here to there, and of coming to care deeply for we find along the way.'

Here are some beautiful lines from *The House of Belonging*:

*This is the bright home
in which I live,
this is where
I ask
my friends
to come,
this is where I want
to love all the things
it has taken me so long
to learn to love.*

*This is the temple
of my adult aloneness
and I belong
to that aloneness
as I belong to my life.*

*There is no house
like the house of belonging.*

■ The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse

Charlie Mackesy

Ebury Press 2019, no pagination, £16.99, h/b.

You may well have seen this book at the top of the bestseller list, and for good reason. Marianne asked me for the book for her Christmas when we were in Hatchards, and it is an absolute classic of practical life wisdom expressed in a charmingly humorous hand-written and illustrated story involving the main characters of the title. Everyone will have their own favourite lines, some of them arrestingly unpredictable. The mole tells the boy that he is so small while the boy replies that he makes a huge difference; and when asked what he wants to be when he grows up, he responds 'kind' and defines success as loving. The boy asks the mole if he has a favourite saying, which turns out to be "if at first you don't succeed, have some cake." "I see, says the boy, does it work?" "Every time", says the mole. Old moles, he says,

wish they had listened less to their fears and more to their dreams. I had better stop, otherwise you might not go out and buy the book for yourself. Once you have done so, your heart will be touched and you will almost certainly want to buy more copies to share with your friends and family!

■ Pianos and Flowers

Alexander McCall Smith

Polygon 2020, 179 pp., £12.99, h/b.

Subtitled 'brief encounters of the romantic kind', these new short stories, - some of which were originally commissioned by the Sunday Times - are adventurous imaginative journeys elaborated from old black-and-white photographs and based on what the author fancied that they might have depicted. The results are highly readable, entertaining and often surprising though ingenious elaboration, sometimes picking out small details and creating whole family histories. Many of the stories conjure up moving and poignant tableaux from the human condition with its myriad complex relationships. Each story has its own distinctive character, suffused with the author's gentle and penetrating humour, even when figures receive their often well merited comeuppance - an old family friend used to say that a sense of humour was a sense of proportion, which comes across finely calibrated in this wonderful collection. I should also say that it has been fun reading them out loud.

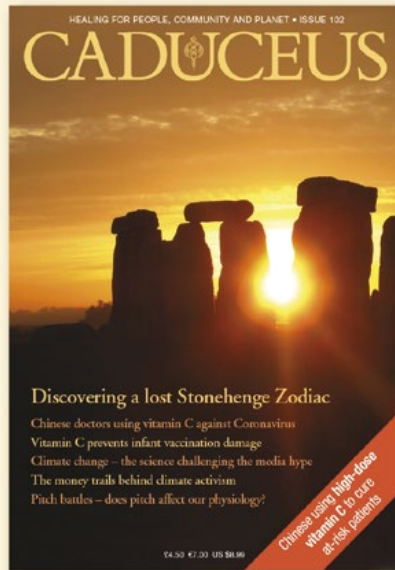
■ The Little Book of Nature Blessings

Teresa Dallbridge

Watkins 2020, 264 pp., £10.99, h/b.

This charming book gives a series of myths, rituals and practices 'for finding calm in the natural world' - which is after all accessible to all of us. The author is a counsellor, healer, Wiccan High Priestess and a member of a Druid Grove, hence she is steeped in connections with the natural world. The book considers possible connections with the luminaries of the sun and moon, then the elements, followed by trees, flowers, animals, rivers and ponds, and the sea. The second part introduces the festivals around the year, with Imbolc just coming up as I write - there are intermediary festivals between the equinoxes and solstices. The author proposes many practices and meditations, so it is a handbook to work with in developing a conscious relationship with nature.

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The Network aims to:

- *challenge the adequacy of scientific materialism as an exclusive basis for knowledge and values. See www.galileocommission.org*
- *provide a safe forum for the critical and open minded discussion of ideas that go beyond reductionist science.*
- *encourage a respect for Earth and Community which emphasises a spiritual and holistic approach.*

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