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## RUDOLF STEINER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

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### Rudolf Steiner Library Newsletter

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The library newsletter is a publication of the Rudolf Steiner Library, the national library of the Anthroposophical Society in America. It is designed to keep library users informed of the contents of the library, as well as protocols for using it. It also features translations of articles from European anthroposophical journals that explore anthroposophy's relationship to the world, thus encouraging dialogue and the mutual exchange of ideas.  
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**Letters to the editor are welcome.**

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## A Word from the Editor

By Mado Spiegler

Back at All Souls' time, Christiane Buchinger-Marks presented her translation of Rilke's "Requiem for a Friend," with commentary, as a benefit for the library. The upstairs meeting room was full and the audience responsive; it was altogether an inspiring event. So, we invited Christiane to adapt the text of her presentation for publication in these pages. Having done so, however, Judith Ellis-Sweningsen and I had sudden misgivings: would readers find it odd, or worse, to find in a spring issue a poem and essay on the theme of death and the dead's presence in our life? We decided that the intrinsic interest of the poem, the quality of the translation and commentary, as well as the timeless centrality of these themes in anthroposophy would counteract any seasonal dissonance. And given the nature of current world events, the reflection on our conversation with the dead is no doubt timely. Along those lines, we do hope that some readers will feel inspired by the annotation on Stephen Greenblatt's *Hamlet in Purgatory*, which is among other things a vivid description of the process whereby early modernity expelled the dead from the consciousness of the living, while opening the gate to modern imagination's conversation with death, of which Shakespeare is a shining example.

This is but one of several books among those annotated or reviewed in this issue that could open readers' inner eye to a long view of the multiple crises of the early 21st century. Whether it is biography, the history of the pursuit of wisdom in the West, the history of Christian monasticism, the role of personal religion, the relationship between economics and religion, the Romantic view of science, or new sightings on Steiner's spiritual exercises, we trust that readers will find here not just intellectual stimulation, but anchors for their personal work in a time of plagues.

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## What's Happening in the Library

By Judith Ellis-Sweningsen

- The sun is shining, the computer's at the repair shop, and people are borrowing books at a great rate. We, our patrons, and the wide world are experiencing myriad challenges amidst the many blessings under the fresh blue skies. We wish everyone well this bittersweet spring—we are ever grateful for your warm support of our work.
- **We are a little less than \$5000 short of our appeal goal with two months left to achieve it. With the 2005 budget on the drawing board, we are hopeful that the library will not face staffing cuts again this year. Can you help?**
- Longtime library friend Nihelene Slater would like to share the fruits of her research into Rudolf Steiner's thoughts on threefolding within the Anthroposophical Society. After a long search, she found an important statement that had not been translated, and promptly sought a translator! Our neighbor Johnny Root, Sr., has done the job, and Nihelene suggested we make this information available through the library. You may borrow it, or purchase a copy (9 pgs.) for \$5.00, and help to bankroll the library! Thank you, Nihelene!
- Jonitha Hasse has also offered a valuable document for our patrons to borrow or buy (\$10.00). Many are familiar with the work of Barbara Betteridge, Jonitha's mother, on the human *gemüt*. Jonitha has compiled Barbara's extensive writing on the subject (80 pgs.), including her mother's handwritten notes and corrections. We're pleased that friends are actively finding ways to benefit the library.
- After a winter hiatus, the library's poetry evenings, inaugurated in November, will resume on May 14 with a presentation by Bill Hunt: "Singing with the Dead." On June 18, Slava Rozentuller will present "The Russian Soul: Temptation and Destiny," which will be followed by a series of bi-

weekly conversations drawing from poetry, fairy tales, and history. If you're out and about this spring, join us!

- Thanks to Jim Kotz, whose donation of missing issues of the Society for the Evolution of Science Newsletter completes our collection.
  - Thanks to volunteer typists Agnes Garrett, Kristen Puckett, and Catherine Read for their help. Readers will appreciate the much-improved typescripts they've created!
  - Reader's Initiative—Mark Riccio has asked that we share this with our patrons: Translation initiative seeks individuals who are interested in working on a new translation of the *Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*. Our goal is to produce a cooperative and living translation that takes into account the organic-living sentence and clause structure of the 1918 German edition. (See Florin Lowndes and George O'Neil's work) The emphasis is on rewriting/translating Steiner while adhering to his particular grammar and style of writing. If interested contact Mark Riccio at [mhamatz@cs.com](mailto:mhamatz@cs.com). Mark contributed several annotations to this issue of the newsletter—we're glad to include another voice! Let us know if you'd like to write for us.
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## Journals

By Mado Spiegler

For a while now, I have wanted to introduce readers to our collection of the French journal *L'Esprit du Temps*, which we owe to Henry Barnes's generosity. French is more widely taught than German in the United States, and any readers with an interest in keeping their French alive or bringing it back up to speed could do worse than to read what is by all standards a very high quality quarterly journal. *L'Esprit du Temps* calls itself an anthroposophic journal, but explicitly states that it “does not seek to propagate any ‘anthroposophic opinion,’ for there can't be such a thing. What [they] attempt to do is to present work growing out of the study of Steiner's research and writing. Every trimester, [they] publish original texts on all subjects that were fertilized by anthroposophy: pedagogy, medicine, science, art, sociology, and so on, as well as other articles specifically bearing on conceptions relative to anthroposophy. *L'Esprit du Temps*'s mission is the cultivation of a true science of the spirit, making it possible to cast on the world a gaze that is both revealing and rigorous.”

Rigor, however, does not mean rigidity or stodginess: some articles are consciously controversial, and the journal invites (and receives) lively feedback. Additionally, most issues include a French translation of a lecture by Steiner relative to the theme of the issue. The translations of Steiner, many of them by Genevieve Bideau, are superb. The articles themselves are written at a very high level, but not forbiddingly so, and the illustrations are carefully chosen and attractive. The small format, comparable to that of *Die Drei*, makes them easy to handle. Some, but not all, of the articles are by authors who write for German periodicals, making it possible to follow some of the very interesting debates in the German-speaking journals. The library has a complete collection covering about ten years, and because *L'Esprit du Temps*'s nice website (<http://www.chez.com/espritudutemps>) has an excellent thematic index, articles of interest can easily be located in our collections. Interested readers can ask me ([madospieg@capital.net](mailto:madospieg@capital.net)) about translations or abstracts of particular articles. Readers interested in the specific problem of translating Steiner may be intrigued by one reader's query about the possibility of a study group in which English and French translations of Steiner would be read side-by-side with the German original.

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## Rilke's "Requiem für eine Freundin"

Adapted from a benefit reading at the Rudolf Steiner Library

By Christiane Buchinger Marks

*Death is the side of life that's turned away from us, not illuminated by us. We must try to expand our consciousness to the utmost, until it is at home in both merging spheres, and inexhaustibly nourished by both.*<sup>1</sup>

Rainer Maria Rilke, the most frequently read German poet after Goethe, doesn't need much introduction. His "Requiem for a Friend," which I recently translated, reflects the connection Rilke cultivated with those beyond the threshold throughout his life. One of his lifelong friends reports in her memoirs that he hesitated to spend another winter alone in her ancestral castle because two young girls who had died there many years back were so strongly present to him. He knew that if he did return to Duino Castle for any length of time, he would have to "occupy" himself "regularly" with Raymondine and Polyxène. He dedicated the fifty-five-poem cycle "Sonette an Orpheus" to the memory of a young dancer who had recently died, and the dead mingle freely with the living as they pass in and out of his ten "Duino Elegies."

Several commentators have looked at Rilke's work from an anthroposophical perspective, knowing that Rilke attended several of Rudolf Steiner's lectures, and that the two corresponded at least once—over a submission the 23-year-old poet had sent to the *Magazin für Literatur*, which Steiner was editing at the time. At issue was the power of words. Rilke could not yet trust this power, and was painfully aware of the trivialization of words. Rudolf Steiner, twelve years his senior, urged him to have more faith in language.<sup>2</sup>

Essays by Albert Steffen and Rudolf Lissau<sup>3</sup> show that it is sometimes difficult to step outside of anthroposophy enough to appreciate artists on their own terms. Steffen, who talked with Rilke repeatedly in Munich between 1914 and 1918, does not get much beyond regretting Rilke's belief that "knowledge" (that anthroposophically-loaded word "Erkenntnis") did not help his poetry, and that he did not understand the difference between the physical and the higher senses—rather a narrow reaction to a figure like Rilke, and possibly just a matter of confusion over terminology.

Lissau claims that Rilke "refused Rudolf Steiner as a teacher" when actually Rilke did not refuse Steiner any more than he totally embraced him; he simply took from him what rang true, what he could make his own. Lissau seems to me to overemphasize Rilke's disavowal of Christ and reincarnation, especially since this conviction was not always firm. But Lissau does in the end call Rilke's late masterpieces "the products of a conscious meditative life and intuition bestowed by grace."

Alfred Schütze, while also particularly interested in the overlap between Rilke's world and that of anthroposophy, appreciates Rilke on his own terms. While regretting that Rilke could not conceive of the life-filled thinking capable of reaching the invisible world that is so important in Steiner's teaching, he points out that Rilke reaches the same goal by ennobling and universalizing emotion and image. Schütze quotes this passage to show that Rilke's references to the souls of the newly dead bespeak intimate knowledge of their path:

*Of course it is strange no longer to live on Earth,  
no longer to be observing customs barely acquired,*

. . . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe aus Muzot 1921-26*, p. 332. English by CBM.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Schütze, *Rainer Maria Rilke: Ein Wissender des Herzens* [Wisdom of the Heart], Urachhaus, 1975, p. 15 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Lissau, "Rilke's Way," *The Golden Blade*, 1954, pp. 83-94; Albert Steffen, "A Poet and a Painter: R.M. Rilke—A Recollection," *The Golden Blade*, 1949, pp. 77-80.

*no longer to be all one once was and carried in unendingly anxious hands—  
to drop even one's own name like a broken plaything.  
Strange, not to go on wishing one's wishes, strange  
to see all that was once connected, loose and flapping  
freely in space...<sup>4</sup>*

Whatever Rilke's feelings toward anthroposophy, Schütze says, here he is characterizing the first after-death stage (kamaloka or purgatory) just as Rudolf Steiner does. At this stage, souls must free themselves of earthly habits, thoughts, and desires. It is these earthly habits that are "flapping/ freely in space," detaching themselves from souls and rejoining the cosmos, just as higher vision shows them to do. Some passages from the "Requiem" have the same intimate, authentic feel. The world of the dead is not sentimentalized; nor does it feel alien or uncanny, but rather busy, productive, and somehow familiar. It is a place where the souls are "so soon at home in being dead/ so natural" and where they "have work to do." There is nothing frightening or otherworldly about the spirit's visitation, either; there is even humor in its effort to call attention to itself by noisily bumping into things as a child might, and the narrator invites it into the light of the candle in simple, everyday language, giving it just as much right "to occupy ...[his] gaze/as any other object."

Rilke wrote "Requiem for a Friend" in Paris between October 31 and November 2, 1908 (All Hallow's to All Souls'), for the young painter, Paula Modersohn Becker. Their friendship goes back to his days at the Worpswede Artists Colony near Bremen, where he lived while in his early twenties, and where he met his wife, Clara, a gifted sculptor and Paula Modersohn's closest friend. Modersohn is generally considered the only artist of lasting importance to have come out of the colony; she alone was bold and innovative, and is sometimes compared with the likes of Munch and Gauguin.

The poem is written in blank verse—unrhymed iambic pentameter—a common form, relatively easy to translate, which has existed in England since the 1500s and is the major form used in Shakespeare's dramas. Milton and the English Romantics used it, as well. In Germany, it was used in the 1800s in the dramas of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller. Rilke uses blank verse in two of his ten "Duino Elegies," as well as in the "Requiem." The iambic pentameter line is very familiar: "Since brass nor earth, nor stone, nor boundless sea"; "Earth hath not anything to show more fair"; "I wake to sleep and take my waking slow." Few of Rilke's numerous translators try to render the meter, which in part spurred my efforts.

The poem is entirely addressed to Paula Modersohn's spirit, which Rilke feels to be strongly present in his study in the still of the night. His words are impassioned, sometimes bitter and even accusatory, but the ending is peaceful. Some readers will recall addressing similar words to those they were grieving for, criticizing them for being who they were and doing what they did, sometimes even accusing them of having caused their own deaths, as Rilke does Paula Modersohn in the passage in which he says she dug up and ate the seeds that were to have sprouted into the plant of her full, mature, "intended" artist's life. But the outpourings, always answered by silence, finally lead to acceptance of this woman, this artist, and of her particular life, with all its limitations and conflicts. At the end of the poem, Rilke humbly asks her to continue to be present to him and help him with his own struggles as an artist. Her spirit is asked to "help from within." In my anthroposophical reading I have encountered just this insight, and experience has borne it out—those who have died do communicate "from within," entering our own thoughts and feelings, which may at times feel almost alien, "taken over" by them.

The poem was written on the first anniversary of Paula Modersohn's death at thirty-one, soon after she gave birth to her first child. It is a poignant scene: The new mother gets up for the first time, putting

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<sup>4</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, from the first "Duino Elegy," completed in 1922. English by CBM.

on a long, flowing robe and settling into an armchair her gathered friends and family have decorated with flowers and vines. She asks for her child, and as soon as the newborn is placed in her arms, her head droops to one side, and with the words “Wie schade!” [What a pity!] on her lips, she dies of a lung embolism.

There is plenty of cause for regret and bitterness right there, but the events leading up to this end make it even more disturbing to Rilke, who, an artist himself, feels keenly the tragedy of an artist’s life cut short. Rilke recognizes that fate and karma are real forces to be reckoned with, although here they are only seen as burdens.

Paula Modersohn had just returned to her husband after trying to live on her own as an artist, and Rilke had regretted her return to what he saw as wifely bondage and a betrayal of her career. Biographical sources tell us that Otto Modersohn, also an artist, was a kind and understanding husband, that Paula had freedom to paint at home, and that, furthermore, she was happy to return to him and bear his child. But literature is not biography, and if Rilke hadn’t projected his own trials and conflicts onto Modersohn’s biography, he might never have written such a lasting, powerful poem, indeed, he might not have written this poem at all. He himself had left his marriage and several relationships with the deepest regret, realizing that they were incompatible with his artistic mission. “There is an ancient feud between/ our lives and the great work we’re meant to do,” as the poem puts it. He wrote it at a time when the great sculptor Auguste Rodin (whose secretary he was for a time) was his model of what an artist should be, and there has probably never been an artist more passionately absorbed in his work than Rodin.

To Rilke, the artist’s world and the everyday world are polar opposites; the tension between them runs through the entire poem. The artist’s world of creativity and transformation is a world out of time, free of the gravity, darkness, fate, possessiveness, and subjectivity that rule in the everyday world. In the poem it is variously referred to as “the law,” “that greater circulation,” “unparalleled orbiting,” and “living in the mirror.” (“You...carried/ yourself before the mirror, let yourself in.”) While painting, Modersohn lived within that mirror, a place apart from the outer world of dark, heavy things, among which Rilke includes marriage and motherhood. In childbed, when Paula Modersohn had abandoned her art, the mirror gave her back to herself and she entered the everyday world again. Rilke imagines the world of the dead to be like the artist’s world—free of earthly burdens—and therefore regrets that Paula Modersohn has left that world to visit him, “forfeiting a piece of ...[her] eternity” to do so.

Rilke (in whom one critic says there is more future than past) is ahead of his time in being concerned with the conflict between a woman’s professional life and marriage and children. Today it is almost customary for a woman to juggle the two, but in 1908 the expectation was that a wife would live entirely for her husband and children, as Paula’s father reminded her she must do—she would have had to choose. Rilke looked ahead to a time—then far off—when couples would be full partners, with equal rights to a profession or an independent life. Rilke is also ahead of his time in describing the changes in a pregnant body, using the word “placenta”—in a poem! The “artist’s blood,” which he saw as something higher than anything physical, as part of a “greater circulation,” is forced to reenter the “body’s insignificant circulation” in order to feed the placenta. During pregnancy and early childhood the mother’s creative (etheric) forces are needed for her child. Of the young artist who chose motherhood over her career, Rilke writes: “You tore away the bright beginnings from your loom/and used up all your threads in a different way”—weaving for her child instead of her art.

Communication with the dead, the conflict between artistic creation and everyday life, and the idea that we must “transform” earthly things to make them real are among the important themes in this poem. Rilke clearly indicates that life after death is not a stagnant time of eternal bliss, but rather a period of preparation: “The dead have work to do.”

**Requiem for a Friend**  
**(Requiem für eine Freundin)**  
**Rainer Maria Rilke**

Dedicated to Paula Modersohn Becker  
Written in Paris October 31–November 2, 1908

English by Christiane Buchinger Marks

I have my dead. I've let them go their way,  
and was amazed to see them be so cheerful,  
so soon at home in being dead, so natural,  
so different from what we'd thought them. You—  
you, only, are returning. You brush up  
against me, try to jar some object, making  
it ring of you, giving away your presence.  
Oh, don't take from me what I'm slowly learning.  
I'm right and you'd be wrong if you should long  
for any earthly thing. For we're transforming it.  
It is not here. We will reflect it outward  
from our being, when we recognize it.

I thought you'd be much farther, and I'm puzzled  
that *you*, of all the dead, should stray and come here,  
Who've more transformed than any other woman.  
That we were shocked to see you die—no, that your  
stark death, dark interruption of our lives,  
tore our “up-to-then” from “ever since”—  
that's our concern, and integrating that  
with our lives will be our constant work.  
But that you—even you—were shocked yourself,  
and are shocked now, where shock's no longer valid—  
that, forfeiting a piece of your eternity,  
you enter here, friend, here, where nothing *is* yet—  
that, for the first time scattered through the cosmos,  
scattered and halved, you did not grasp the ascent  
of endless natures as of earthly things—  
that, once received into that circulation,  
you've let the gravity of some vague restlessness  
pull you back down to calculated time—  
this often wakes me up nights like a burglar.  
If I could only say you deign to come,  
you come in generosity, abundance,  
feeling so safe, secure within yourself,  
you wander like a child, all unafraid  
of places where someone might do you harm!  
But no! You come in supplication. This,  
this jars my very bones—a whining saw.  
If you came like a ghost, with some reproach,  
pursued me with it, when at night I enter  
my lungs, my bowels, retreat into my heart's

last, poorest little chamber, such reproach  
would be less cruel than this begging.  
What do you beg for?

Tell me, shall I travel? Did you leave  
something behind somewhere that's suffering,  
wanting to follow you? Or shall I visit  
a country that you never saw but knew  
as if it were your senses' other half?

I'll travel on its rivers, go on land,  
and ask the people there about old customs.  
I'll speak to women standing in their doorways,  
and watch them as they call their children home.  
I'll notice how they wear the landscape there,  
pursuing ancient work in fields and meadows,  
demand that they should lead me to their king.  
I'll tempt their priests by offering bribes, until  
they lay me down by their most powerful statute,  
and go away, closing the temple gates.  
Then, after learning many things, I will  
simply observe the animals, so something  
about the way their bodies turn glides over  
into my joints. I'll have a short existence  
inside their eyes, which hold and then release me,  
slowly release me, without judging me.  
I'll have the gardeners recite to me  
their many flowers, so that in the shards  
of all the lovely names, leftover still,  
there'll be a hundred fragrances for you.  
And I will buy their fruit there, fruit in which  
the land *is* once again, up to the skies.

Because you knew them well, the full, ripe fruits.  
You picked and gathered them in bowls before you,  
and cancelled out their heaviness with color.  
You saw the women that way, too—as fruit,  
the children, as the forms of their existence  
were filling, ripening, from within.  
And finally you saw yourself as fruit.  
You took yourself out of your clothes and carried  
yourself before the mirror, let yourself in.  
Your gaze alone was left, and it stood wide before.  
You said, not “This is I” but just “This is.”  
So free of curiosity your gaze  
at last, so unpossessive, truly poor,  
that it desired you no longer—holy.

That's how I'd like to see you always—deep  
within the mirror where you'd placed yourself,

far from all else. Why come here differently?  
And why revoke yourself? Why are you trying  
to tell me that those amber beads that hung  
about your neck still held some heaviness  
such as is never found in the beyond's  
calm images? Why show me in your bearing  
dark premonitions? Why do you interpret  
your body's lines like lines upon a hand?  
No longer can I see them without fate.

Come closer to the candle. I've no fear  
of looking at the dead, and when they come,  
then they must have the right to occupy  
our gaze, like every other thing around us.

Come here. Let us be still awhile together.  
Look at this rose, right here, upon my desk.  
Isn't the light around it just as tentative  
as around you? It shouldn't be here, either.  
Out in the flower garden and unmingled  
with me it should have stayed or perished. Now  
it sojourns here. What is my consciousness to it?

Do not be startled! Now I'm grasping it!  
It's coming to me, and I cannot stop it.  
I *have* to grasp it, even if it kills me—  
to grasp the fact that you are here.  
Just as the blind will grasp and grope an object,  
I feel your lot and know no name for it.  
Together let us mourn that someone took you  
out of your mirror. Say, can you still cry?  
You cannot. You've transformed all power  
and upsurge  
your tears once held into your ripening gaze.  
You were transmuting all your vital fluids  
like this, into a powerful, soaring presence,  
spiraling upwards, balanced and headlong.  
It was an accident that tore you down—your last.  
It tore you down from your most distant progress,  
back to a world in which the body rules.  
Not all at once. Only a piece at first.  
But when, around this piece, each day, reality  
increased and made it heavy, then you needed  
yourself entirely. So you went and started  
to break yourself in chunks out of the law,  
painstakingly. You had to have yourself.  
Tore yourself down. From your heart's nightwarm soil  
you dug the seeds, still green, from which  
your death was meant to sprout. Yours—  
your own death, and fitting for your life.  
You ate them, ate the grains of death, your death,

as you'd eat any other grains. You ate them,  
and got from them an aftertaste of sweetness  
that you had not intended, had sweet lips,  
you, who'd already sweetness in your senses.

Oh, let us mourn. Do you know how your blood  
left its unparalleled orbiting in hesitation,  
and in reluctance, called away by you?  
How in confusion it took up once more  
the body's insignificant circulation,  
in wonder, in suspicion entered the placenta,  
suddenly tired from the arduous journey back.  
You drove it on and shoved it forward.  
You dragged it to the bonfire, as a herd  
of sacrificial animals is dragged,  
even demanding that your blood rejoice.  
You forced it to. It *did*, at last, rejoice,  
came running up, surrendering to you.  
Since you'd been living by those other standards,  
it seemed to you this would not be for long.  
But now you were in time, and time is long.  
And time goes by, and time increases, time  
is relapse after lengthy illness.

How short your life was when you now compare it  
with all those hours when you were sitting, bending  
the richest energies of your rich future  
wordlessly toward the child-beginnings in you,  
which placed you back in fate. Oh, bitter work!  
Oh, work exceeding any strength! You did it  
day in, day out; you dragged yourself to it,  
pulling the bright beginnings from your loom,  
and used up all your threads a different way.  
And finally still had heart for celebration.  
You'd done it. Now you wanted a reward,  
like ailing children who've been made to drink  
bittersweet herb tea that might make them well.  
This, the reward you gave yourself: From others  
you were too far, even now, and no one could  
have thought of a reward to help you heal.  
You knew that. And when you sat up in childbed  
the mirror there before you gave back all,  
completely. And all *you* now were sat *facing*  
the mirror, which held nothing but illusion—  
lovely illusion: Any woman trying  
on jewelry, combing, playing with, her hair.

And so you died as women used to die,  
the old-fashioned way, in their warm homes,  
the way newly-delivered women die,  
trying in vain to close again. They fail,



because the darkness they deliver with  
their child comes crowding back, reenters.

Should we have hired mourners, after all,  
women who cry for money and when paid  
sufficiently, bawl on, the still night through?  
Bring on traditions! We don't have enough  
traditions. All simply passes and is talked to death.  
So you must come, though dead, and here with me  
make up the mourning. Do you hear me mourn?  
I want to throw my voice, a spreading cloth,  
down on the broken pieces of your death,  
and tug on it till it is all in tatters,  
and everything I said would, in this voice  
be ragged, shivering with the cold—if I  
could stop at mourning. But I now accuse  
not him who pulled you back out of yourself  
(I can't distinguish him from all the others)  
but *all* in him. I now accuse the Man.

If somewhere deep within me there should rise  
part of my distant childhood, new to me—  
perhaps the purest essence of my childhood—  
I do not want to know. But, face averted  
I'll fashion it into an angel, whom  
I'll hurl high up into the frontmost row  
of screaming angels who're reminding God.

Because this suffering has gone on too long.  
No one knows how. It is too much for us,  
this tangled suffering that the wrong love brings,  
which, counting on the passing years and habit  
thinks it has rights and fattens up on wrongs.  
Where is the man with rights to ownership?  
And who can own what does not hold itself,  
will sometimes joyously just catch itself,  
only to toss itself, as does a child a ball:  
The captain does not hold the Nike fastened  
To his ship's prow, when her divinity's  
mysterious lightness catches up and carries  
her suddenly into the bright sea wind.  
And none of us can summon back the woman  
who does not see us any longer, who,  
along a narrow strip of her existence  
walks off, miraculously guided, safe.  
He would be courting guilt, the man who tried it.

For *this* is guilt, if anything is guilt:  
Not to increase the loved one's every freedom  
by all the freedom we ourselves can muster.  
We have, as lovers, only this: We may  
let one another go. For holding on  
comes easily and need not first be learned.

Are you still here? Where? In which corner are you?  
You knew so much of this, were capable  
of, oh, so much when you got up and walked away,  
as open as the newly-dawning day.  
For women suffer. Love means loneliness.  
Artists sometimes foresee this as they work—  
that loving means transforming what they love,  
You started both tasks. Both make up a part  
of what your fame disfigures, robs you of.  
Ah, you were far removed from any fame,  
and inconspicuous. Quietly you'd taken  
your beauty down as flags are taken down  
on a gray workday morning, and to have  
long years to work in, was your only wish.  
Yet it was left undone, this work. Undone.

If you're still here, if in this dark expanse  
there's still a spot at which your spirit moves  
responsively along the shallow soundwaves  
stirred by a solitary nighttime voice  
in the air currents of this lofty room,  
then hear me. Help me. Look—we slip back out  
of our progress without realizing,  
to places where we do not mean to be,  
where we are held, ensnared, as in a dream,  
and where we die without awakening.  
No one gets farther. If you've ever lifted  
your blood up into long and difficult work,  
you know that when you cease to hold it up  
it follows gravity, becoming worthless.  
There is, somewhere, an ancient feud between  
our lives and the great work we're meant to do.  
Help me to comprehend it, tell of it.

Do not come back. If you can bear it, be  
dead with the dead. The dead have work to do.  
Yet help me in a way that won't distract you.  
Help from within, as farthest forces do.

## **Stairway of Surprise: Six Steps to a Creative Life**

By Michael Lipson, Ph.D.

Anthroposophic Press, 2002, 128 pgs.

Review by Gertrude Reif Hughes

Most readers of the Rudolf Steiner Library Newsletter will be familiar with the “six exercises” Steiner gave to accompany one’s meditative life or prepare one to start a meditative practice. Practitioners are to try to establish a certain control over their thinking, willing, and feeling. After that, they try to develop a capacity for positive response, and a capacity to be open to what life brings. Anyone who tries to carry out the simple techniques Steiner suggests for achieving these abilities soon discovers both how far-reaching and how difficult a project the six exercises really are. In prescribing them, which he did differently at various times, Steiner made available a deeply significant practice that could support one’s inner life in a most beneficial if seemingly minimal way.

Forty-plus years after I first tried them, the ingenuity and efficacy of the exercises continue to impress themselves on me, as does their difficulty. Steiner knew precisely how chaotic one’s inner life could be; but he also knew that all who wanted to could summon from within themselves capacities that could begin to transform the chaos. In my travels as a facilitator of meditation workshops, I’ve found that most people take the six exercises as a grim test one has to pass before getting to the good stuff—beautiful mantras, spirit-filled revelations, and the like. Only rarely have I encountered people who take pleasure in their experience with the exercises. Michael Lipson does that and more. His warm, wise, generous, and artfully short book, *Stairway of Surprise: Six Steps to a Creative Life*, places them in the context of creativity and meaningfulness and so gives them their due as a serious, perhaps crucial means to a healthy consciousness.

Lipson locates his Stairway of Surprise in the realm of the sacred, not the utilitarian, and he shows that all six qualities are aspects of attention. It is the attention that is being schooled. The exercises turn the attention toward its own word-like nature and therefore in the direction both of meaning and of communication (or communion) and creativity, where creativity means participating in, or rather uniting with, a continuously evolving relationship between heaven and earth. In other words, a first surprise on Lipson’s Stairway of Surprise is that the goal of the six practices is never to get them over with but rather to achieve the ability to enjoy them. Each aspect deeply orders and enhances our being when we treat each one as the miracle it really is. In Lipson’s reassuring and inspiring version, the six steps form a progression of ever new, ever astonishing, and so always beckoning experiences of understanding, the recognizing, communicative kind that pleases and fortifies by making knower and known partners in the project.

Though Lipson keeps Steiner’s order as Steiner (quite unusually in fact) specified that one must, he makes a felicitous change when he renames them. “Formerly,” Lipson says without apology or fuss, “they were known as *concentration of thought, initiative of will, equanimity, positivity, freedom from prejudice, and forgiveness*. I have given [them] new names...and have adapted them for our day. They are *thinking, doing, feeling, loving, opening, and thanking*.” Michael Lipson’s adaptations “for our day” do indeed make the concepts and exercises clear for the speeded up, spiritually hungry world we live in. His changes enhance rather than dilute the deep relevance and power that the exercises held when Steiner first rearticulated them for use in spiritual science by synthesizing various earlier traditions of chakra development and soul schooling from both East and West.

*Stairway of Surprise* treats each of the six qualities as “deep meditations in themselves,” while at the same time acknowledging, and expecting readers to notice, that they are extensions of qualities we know from everyday experiences. Lipson’s own devoted practice shows in his canny suggestions for approaching each quality and in his thoughtfulness about the fullest meaning of each. He acknowledges that transforming or developing the six soul qualities requires much of us but then, instead of dwelling on the diffi-

culties, he clarifies and elaborates them, describing each quality with such intelligence, wit, and appreciation that his directives read like invitations rather than challenges. Reading *Stairway of Surprise* feels like playing tennis with someone who plays better than you do. Instead of hitting the ball into the net or off the court all the time, you can keep a long volley going and let the illusion that you're a much stronger player than you really are encourage you.

Michael Lipson is an excellent teacher. Inspired, he says, by the Hungarian chemist, psychologist, and linguist, Georg K uhlewind, as well as by Steiner, Lipson shows how we tend to resort to the habitual versions of thinking or doing or feeling, rather than to rise to the free, and therefore meaningful, exercise of each. Really to think would be to avoid so-called free associations, which are actually distractions, and to focus instead on a chosen theme or object so intently that it absorbs you ever more fully until in self-forgetfulness you experience your own being, the I Am. So too with doing. Instead of an exercise in persistence or obedience, doing can partake of a magical quality in obeying that's more like moving to music. The word "obedience," says Lipson, derives from the Latin for "hearing." Then he tells a story or two to illustrate how true doing can issue effortlessly from what K uhlewind calls the "soft will" the way our thoughts become—who knows how?—spoken words that issue from our speech organs. Lipson's anecdotes, by the way, are charming and powerful at the same time. They open windows here and there on his life as a father, a psychotherapist, and a lover of language and literature. Like all good teachers, he pays them out with just enough frequency to instruct and delight but not so much that he becomes the subject of his book.

Just as doing is not a matter of exertion but of the soft will, so feeling is not emotion. Emotion always has to do with my own needs and wants, but feeling is a sensing, a perceiving, "a form of understanding," says Lipson, "and its practice leads to ever more and new understandings." The book's first sentence declares, "There is something *extra* about the human soul," and the *Stairway of Surprise* shows how all six aspects of attention belong ever more crucially to the realm of excess or what Blake called "the palace of wisdom," Emerson "paradise" and Emily Dickinson "amplitude and awe." Lipson's appreciation and reverence for the non-utilitarian and therefore the potentially sacred, and his own contemplative experiences of this realm, become quietly apparent as the book progresses. Here is how he introduces his chapter on loving, the quality that Steiner called positivity:

The capacity to focus on what is good is no superficial graft from civilization, but a deeply rooted aspect of who we are. We often ignore this positive slant, yet our cynical or world-weary styles are the most superficial show compared with the fundamental optimism that keeps us talking and listening and reading. We can become more conscious of the largely unconscious loving, and draw it up ever more into evidence.

Blaming comes easily to us, but "Loving means that we seek out what is good and put our consciousness there." When you do focus on the good, "The people around you, without losing a single flaw, grow more precious." Yes, "without losing a single flaw," so it must be you, not they, who have changed: "You become available to subtle presences and processes previously overlooked, ignored, or forgotten. The day becomes more alive around you. Instead of escaping from life into some abstraction of goodness, you find that the morning is made of virtue and time itself bends close to whisper its secrets in your ear." I wouldn't know how to want lovelier writing.

Like Steiner, Lipson highlights the connections among the six qualities and the need to practice them in order. Without loving, the fifth quality, opening, would be a foolish risk. Once loving has been practiced, "we need less protection from life," and we can open to what already exists. Additionally, opening prepares us to receive the future: "We don't know what will happen next. We will receive it. We will create it."

The five steps have all been in a fundamental way exercises in thinking. The book's final eloquence brings thinking to thanking. Along with the discussion of loving, the ideas for how to work with thanking are the most original in this original book. Lipson suggests that we ask a question—our own, not someone

else's; a real question, not one we already know the answer to. We work with it contemplatively. Perhaps we fail to find an answer. But our earlier work with loving helps us accentuate what we do find: "You can marvel at the arena that has come into view" by means of your question.

When he comes to the sixth quality, which Steiner designated as "forgiveness," Lipson explains why he himself calls it thanking. In practicing forgiveness, he had noticed its relation to thanking. "Forgiveness is the beginning of thanks, and then thanks has no end." He confides to us that he has imagined "a contemplative order whose whole profession would be thanking and nothing else." With his familiar blend of depth and charm, he describes the imaginary contemplative order for us:

They would be doing the rest of us an enormous service. Instead of the airwaves and thought waves that perpetuate the world's resentment, such an order would send out a quality that helps to marry heaven and earth ever more intimately. Thanks reaches into the sources of the world, and brings creator and creature close together.

Meditation brings creator and creature close together. Whenever it begins, this is what it does. And all it needs to do *is* begin. Lipson's imaginative, loving, and joyous treatment of all that there is to do on the Stairway of Surprise makes his book an aid to getting started and a celebration of the very act of doing so. In addition to my own copy of *Stairway of Surprise*, I possess a lending copy, and have bought some three others as gifts. I predict that if you borrow this one from the library, you'll soon order at least one of your own from SteinerBooks. *Stairway of Surprise* is a book of spiritual science to read, study, use, and be thankful for.

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### **An Endless Trace: The Passionate Pursuit of Wisdom in the West**

By Christopher Bamford

Codhill Press, 2003, 303 pgs.

Review by Fred Dennehy

Anyone who intends to speak well and truly of the spirit commits to *agon*—an unending struggle to say the unsayable. Because language uses fixed signs, and the spirit only begins on the level of becoming, it is a fight that cannot be won. Though a wise writer knows before starting that he or she will not succeed, how one acquits oneself in pursuing that lost cause may reveal more of what one hopes to convey than the bare text.

Christopher Bamford has been engaged in this struggle for the whole of his professional life. In *An Endless Trace*, which is a compilation of his talks, articles, and introductions showing us a history of Western esoteric thinking over the last 2500 years, he brings us repeatedly to the borders of spiritual reality. In our encounters with many of the focal points of these essays—the *logos*, polarity, the evolution of consciousness, sacrifice as a creative principle—we find the writing becoming dense, breathlessly and sometimes maddeningly, then eliding from exposition to meditation.

We come to an impasse or two in these essays, hoping in frustration for a hand to pull us through the thicket of language to the heart of the mystery. We are often disappointed, because we must make our own way. But that is how Bamford has chosen to pursue the *agon*—he refuses to give easy answers. He does not say the magic word. What Bamford does give us is more and more surprising and very different paths that lead toward that same heart—an endless trace of ways.

Isaiah Berlin famously divided the world of writers into foxes and hedgehogs: the fox knows many things; the hedgehog knows one big thing. Bamford refutes Berlin. He seems to know everything there is to know about esoteric Christianity but at the same time knows it to be one thing—the realization of Sophia, the way of wisdom. Every essay in this book unfolds the author's embracing love—from *eros* through *agape*—for Sophia.

*An Endless Trace* is staggering in its erudition. No one will come away from this book without having learned new, unexpected, and marvelous things; no one will be without new names to become familiar with and new streams to explore. Although the book is deeply and devotionally Christian, the entire Western esoteric and philosophical tradition, from Pythagoras and Plato to Heidegger and Schwaller de Lubicz, is seen afresh in its relation to Christianity. And informing the book throughout are insights of Rudolf Steiner, Owen Barfield, Georg K uhlewind, and others that Bamford has made his own and carried into new places.

There is much more. His chapter, “Romanticism and the Evolution of Consciousness,” allowed me to see John Keats, through some of his more obscure poems, for the first time. And because Bamford understands all things to be images of the spirit, there are chapters and passages that can forever change our view of what we might be tempted to think of as commonplace. After reading “Our Daily Bread” and “The Love that Moves the Stars: Friendship and Walking,” I will not make the mistake again of treating eating or walking as utilitarian functions. They are not. They are dimensions of the spirit.

I have spoken in this review about “the spirit.” The spirit, as Bamford describes it in “Deserts and Gardens,” is “cool, transcendent, high, empty, absolute, and timeless.” These essays are anything but cool and empty. That is partly because Bamford’s personal history has led him from the desert to the garden. Now, to approach the spirit means to live in the soul. His way is the way of the heart, and what is so refreshing and moving about this book is his ease in speaking directly and personally of love, sacrifice, and renunciation. Other writers talk of virtue and we are either put off or embarrassed. When Bamford speaks of humility and simplicity, it is exciting. When he writes of devotion we do not nod in admiration; we want to share what he so clearly feels.

We might look at the millennia of history embraced in *An Endless Trace* and see a catalog of abandoned or moribund movements—from the Pythagorean School through the Celtic mysteries, the Troubadours, the Rosicrucians, German Idealistic philosophy, and Romanticism. We might be tempted to conclude that the Western esoteric tradition is a history of necessary failures. But that is not at all the feel of this book. What will touch every reader is its optimism—its certainty that the perennial wisdom, though it may have repeatedly been driven underground, will spring up again and again. While there is not a specific essay in *An Endless Trace* devoted to anthroposophy, this passionate optimism, as someone observed to me in a conversation about this book, *is* anthroposophy.

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### **The Beejum Book**

By Alice O. Howell

Bell Pond Books, 2002, 309 pgs.

Review by Nancy Dill

This is bound to become a classic! Knowing nothing about the book or its author when I first picked it up, I expected that it might be someone’s sweetened alternative to the Harry Potter books, but it is nothing of the sort. Alice Howell’s lifelong scholarship in the world’s great religions and philosophies shines from the pages of this book. In this, her first work of fiction, the 80-year-old mother and grandmother has woven a tapestry based on memories of her childhood growing up “on the road” with professional parents in 1930s Europe. But that is only one part. Enriching her young life was an alternate, but parallel, world, created originally out of her mother’s imagination in order to help the young daughter, called Teak, cope with the loneliness and insecurity of their lifestyle. This alternative world is Teak’s haven and refuge, *Beejumstan*, filled with “archetypal characters, magical animals, and all the phantasmagoria that [her] unconscious and that of her parents allowed to emerge” (p. 308). The two worlds, or “Bubbles” as they are known, come together in a splendid book for children of all ages that is rich with deep wisdom, colorful

players, and a language abundant with imagery and double entendre. For starters, just think of little Ms. Spider sitting in her window-corner studying the *Philosophy of Spinoza*!

Perhaps most appealing for me are the deep spiritual and life-truths that emerge out of the playful settings and fanciful characters. There is, for example, Figg Newton, who has spent years of his life compulsively accumulating books and book knowledge, to the point where his continually growing nose can no longer support the twelve pairs of glasses needed for his dimming eyesight. After a crisis and near disaster, he awakens to the realization that the actual experiencing of life and its joys is much more valuable than reading about it and accumulating facts.

Teak's host in Beejumstan is a companionable rabbit, appropriately named Lonesome. Figg Newton and Lonesome together introduce Teak to the many others who can teach her more lessons: Mercy Muchmore, a wise old woman of nature, and an "everybody's mother" figure, gives Teak persnippity tea and Blaskells to help with those difficult times when "you have lost touch with your true nature and can't see the rhyme and reason for things." Two witches, Rudintrude and Idy Fix, warn in a frightening incident that rudeness and not thinking for oneself can have disastrous consequences. The fiery Dragondog becomes Teak's unexpected ally in a narrow escape from the witches.

Teak's years of travel in Europe, homeless and lonely as they were for her, aided in her maturation and development into a young woman who, in the end, could understand firsthand the qualities of tolerance and cultural diversity. Her travels in Beejumstan were her refuge from loneliness, but at the same time they were filled with many important lessons, culminating in her meeting with the wise leader, Gezeebius, (who travels on the Cloud of Unknowing, propelled by a purring cat!) and the lesson of the lamps...but you must read about this for yourself, together with the many other colorful and inspired tales offered up by the writer.

In closing, I must share a question of my own. What's with the rabbit image, I asked? Lonesome was the link to Beejumstan for Teak, and Alice in Wonderland also had one, and there have been others. I was compelled to do some research about the deeper meanings of the rabbit. Among other things, but perhaps most importantly for this tale, I learned that the rabbit, in some cultures, is thought to be able to cross over between this world and the Otherworld. Thus, it is a very fitting image after all.

Thank you, Alice Howell, for a book to read to children and for oneself, over and over again.

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## **Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe**

By Robert J. Richards

University of Chicago Press, 2002, 587 pgs.

Review by Christina M. Root

Robert J. Richards takes Friedrich Schlegel's famous dictum that "all art should become science and all science art" as the epigraph for his new book, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe*. Instead of regarding Schlegel's statement as the naïve wish of a lost time, Richards sets out to show the extent to which German Romantic thinkers achieve the goal of unifying art and science. He explores the ways in which members of the Jena circle, including Schiller, Goethe, the brothers Schlegel, and Friedrich Schelling overcome the dualism of the Newtonian tradition, grapple with the challenges laid down by Kant, and ultimately articulate a dynamic vision of the unity of mind and nature that had a profound influence on the development of nineteenth-century science.

Richards, the director of the Fishbein Center for the History of Science at the University of Chicago, comes to this project after two books on Darwinian evolution: *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior*, and *The Meaning of Evolution: the Morphological Construction and Ideological Reconstruction of Darwin's Theory*. Richards's argument here grows directly out of the sec-

ond book, where he first discussed Darwin's debt to German Romanticism and the erasing of that debt by subsequent evolutionary theorists. His aim is ambitious: he wishes to reorient our understanding of Darwin to include the much-neglected influence of Romantic biology, particularly Goethe's morphology. He argues that Darwin was himself a Romantic who embraced the idea that nature develops organically instead of mechanically, propelled by formative forces from within. Though he focuses most of his attention on the Romantics themselves, Richards's ultimate goal is to rescue Darwin from the conventional British context to which he is usually confined and restore him to the non-dualistic tradition of German Romanticism.

Richards's argument is evident in the generous spirit in which he approaches his subjects. Unlike many contemporary historians, he doesn't try to rehabilitate the thinkers he studies by making them sound modern—though he does argue that both Schelling and Goethe were convinced of the transmutation of species—nor does he fall into the alternate trap of regarding his task as showing the degree to which their ideas have been proven wrong. Instead, he appreciates what their ideas continue to have to offer. For example, in the conclusion to his discussion of Schelling's transcendental idealism, he asks whether “one can seriously be an idealist in the Schellian mode today.” His answer may surprise readers committed to historicist interpretations of the past: “It hardly seems easier to believe the world is really a ball of mathematical strings that reveals itself to our consciousness as natural objects of ordinary experience than to believe it is an organic structure of ideas that reveals itself in comparable fashion. Idealism cannot be defeated, only forgotten” (p. 192).

Students of Goethe's phenomenological approach to science will find the book tremendously helpful. Richards places Goethe in the rich historical context of the twin revolutions—the French and the Kantian—as well as within the biographical context of friendships, quarrels, and romantic relationships.

Central to Romantic debates is the issue of whether living organisms can be understood mechanistically. Despite Kant's insistence that “an organized being is not a mere machine: for the latter has only the power of motion, while the former has a formative power [*bildende Kraft*]” (p. 66), Kant argues against our being able to achieve any objective knowledge of that formative power. According to Kant, it may not be possible to reduce living creatures to mechanical explanations of their functions, but science must proceed as if it were, because only a divine intuition could grasp the nature of their organizing principle. Any intuition of entelechy in organisms should be used only heuristically—an enabling “as if”—to guide investigations into the quantifiable, cause-and-effect relationships that determine the physical processes within organisms.

According to Richards, Schiller helped Goethe see validity in Kant's *a priori*, constructive mental categories; in response to Kant, Goethe became sensitive to the fact that “we theorize every time we look carefully at the world.” However, after refining his thinking with the help of Schelling, Goethe again insisted on the capacity to know nature directly, and refused to accept Kant's denial of human intuition as a means of recognizing the entelechy of living beings. Goethe's “discovery” of the archetypal plant constituted his apprehension of “ideas resident in nature.” By approaching nature with his intuitive as well as his analytical faculties, Goethe formed a bridge between consciousness and nature. As Richards puts it, “Goethe maintains, as did Schelling, that if archetypal ideas are necessary for our experience of organic nature, then they must be constituents of that experience—mentally creative of that experience...in such mental creations, we share in nature's own generative power” (p. 490). We become conscious of that shared power not only in artistic creation but also in scientific investigation carried out along Goethean lines. Goethe says: “Since the simpler powers of nature are often hidden from our senses, we must seek through the powers of our mind to reach out to them and represent their nature in ourselves...for our mind stands in harmony with the deeper lying, simpler powers of nature and so can represent them in a pure way, just as we can perceive the objects of the visible world with a clear eye” (p. 439). The archetype becomes the means of recognizing those simpler powers with the inner eye. According to Goethe, living organisms derive their structures from two complementary forces: an intrinsic one, which determines the

pattern of the whole and an extrinsic force which shapes an organism to its particular circumstances (p. 445). Through an experience of the archetype, we begin to participate in the formative forces at work in nature.

Particularly fascinating is Richards's tracing of various influences on Goethe's thought, particularly Schelling and Spinoza, and Goethe's own influence on the science of the nineteenth century. It is impossible to do justice to the tremendous scope and detail of Richards's discussions. The book has a huge cast of characters, all of whom worked with and developed Goethe's ideas. In addition to chapters on the philosophers who justifiably dominate the book, there are chapters on the scientists Blumenbach, Reil, Oken, Carus, Owen, and Alexander von Humboldt, among others. Richards shows how the archetype was taken up by German biologists and was used in the thriving new field of morphology that Goethe initiated. He shows how the German inheritors of Goethe's approach sustained the dynamic dimensions of the archetype; whereas the British interpreted it in literal terms as prototype—the vertebra for example—and treated the archetype as the lowest physical common denominator shared by all members of a particular group (p. 453).

In the epilogue, Richards draws out the Romantic elements of Darwin's theory, reiterating the claim of his introduction that the *Origin of Species* “constructs nature as an infinitely creative, moral force operating according to simple, unifying laws that lie beneath the plane of the great variability of life” (p. 34). Darwin's organicism shows itself most clearly in his description of natural selection, which Richards claims has only mistakenly been called the “mechanism” of evolutionary change. Darwin never spoke of natural selection in mechanical terms and instead regarded the “nature to which it gave rise... in its parts and in the whole as a teleologically self-organizing structure.”

Richards maintains that Darwin rejected utilitarian explanations of the sources of human conscience in favor of a vision of instincts as intrinsic moral impulses through which human beings “advanced the cause of others without counting the cost to self” (p. 551). Most readers of the *Origin*, initially at least, experience Darwin as attributing telos to nature. But evolutionary theorists have long since habituated us to a Kantian interpretation of Darwin's vivid descriptions of nature's processes. When reading the *Origin* we assume what Richards argues Kant asks us to assume in our investigations of nature: that we should understand his teleological language only heuristically as a helpful tool in figuring out *how* something happened. We supply an “as if” to Darwin's famous description of natural selection as “daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working whenever and wherever opportunity offers at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life” (p. 534). Richards prefers to take Darwin at his word.

Richards's alternative view of Darwin as a Romantic has been argued before. For instance, Rupert Sheldrake, in his book *The Rebirth of Nature* enlists Darwin explicitly for the school of Romantic anti-materialism: “Darwin turned the Romantic vision of the creative power of nature into a scientific theory. He rejected the God of the Newtonian world-machine...and saw in Mother Nature the source of all forms of life” (p. 71).

That this view of Darwin is available elsewhere doesn't make Richards's articulation of it any less important. His reading of Darwin within the detailed historical context he provides heightens our awareness of the ideological reconstruction carried out over the last century to bring the history of science into line with the continued dominance of a narrow materialism.

The book has two weaknesses. Richards claims that the stormy love affairs among his characters contributed to, if they did not fully determine, the philosophical positions that these passionate thinkers developed. Yet to my mind the specific stories he tells, while fascinating in their own right, don't carry the explanatory resonances that he hopes. The other weakness is the book's organization. Though Richards clearly wishes to construct a narrative in which ideas emerge organically out of the relationships he explores, I found myself at times wanting a more straightforward expository method. Nevertheless, the



book's consistent focus on the life sciences grounds ideas that in other intellectual histories of the period appear highly abstract. We learn what is at stake in the Romantics' attempts to wrest nature and human consciousness from those who have tried to render nature a "dead aggregate" and limit thinking to arid speculation. Schlegel's wish that art and science become one is fulfilled in Goethe's demonstration that both participate in a larger shared world of creative impulses manifesting in both nature and art.

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## Annotations

### **Anthroposophy—Rudolf Steiner**

#### **Calendar 1912/1913,**

SteinerBooks, 2003, 159 pgs.

This is a facsimile of the original German edition, containing the calendar created by Rudolf Steiner, with illustrations by Imma von Eckardstein. Translated, edited, and introduced by Christopher Bamford, the book also includes the *Calendar of the Soul* verses in both German and English, with Steiner's sketches and handwritten notes translated into English.

The following eight volumes, all part of the "Pocket Library of Spiritual Wisdom: Practical Applications," contain lectures or extracts from previously translated works on particular themes, with helpful introductions, commentary, and notes, and suggestions for further reading.

**Agriculture: An Introductory Reader**, Sophia Books, 2003, 236 pgs. Compiled by Richard Thornton Smith.

**Architecture**, Sophia Books, 2003, 274 pgs. Compiled by Andrew Beard.

Includes some lectures previously available only as typescripts.

#### **Art: An Introductory**

**Reader**, Sophia Books, 2003, 263 pgs. Compiled by Anne Stockton.

Includes "The Seven Planetary Capitals of the First Goetheanum," a previously untranslated text.

#### **Education: An Introductory**

**Reader**, Sophia Books, 2003, 214 pgs. Compiled by Christopher Clouder.

#### **Medicine: An Introductory**

**Reader**, Sophia Books, 2003, 222 pgs. Compiled by Andrew Maendl.

#### **Religion: An Introductory**

**Reader**, Sophia Books, 2003, 216 pgs. Compiled by Andrew Welburn.

#### **Science: An Introductory**

**Reader**, Sophia Books, 2003, 240 pgs. Compiled by Howard Smith.

#### **Social and Political Science:**

**An Introductory Reader**, Sophia Books, 2003, 214 pgs. Compiled by Stephen Usher.

Includes two previously untranslated memoranda of 1917.

#### **Anthroposophy—Agriculture**

Thun, Maria, **Results from the Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar**, Floris Books, 2003, 216 pgs.

Longtime biodynamic grower and researcher Maria Thun describes the cosmic rhythms that influence the quality of produce. She discusses the stars, soil, composting and manuring, weeds and pests, as well as growing cereals, vegetables, herbs, fruit, and wine grapes.

—jes

#### **Anthroposophy—Education**

Bruin, Dick, and Attie Lichthart, **Painting in Waldorf Education**, AWSNA, 2004, 213 pgs.

Two experienced Dutch Waldorf teachers have created this very comprehensive guide for painting with students from kindergarten through high school. The book is accompanied by a CD-ROM with sixty images referred to in the text. Instructions are clear and detailed, and a wonderful feature is preparatory exercises for the teacher.

This book will be in great demand!

—jes

Ellersiek, Wilma, **Giving Love—Bringing Joy: Hand Gesture Games and Lullabies in the Mood of the Fifth**, translated and edited by Lyn and Kundry Willwerth, WECAN (Waldorf Early

Childhood Association of North America), 2003, 110 pgs.

This is another excellent resource for teachers and parents of children under 7 years published by WECAN. Wilma Ellersiek, a professor at the Academy for Music and Theater in Stuttgart, Germany, turned her life experience in the education of actors, speakers, and Dalcroze rhythmists to the service of young children, whose healthy language and movement development is so significantly compromised in our time. Much social criticism has been written on this topic, but here is a book with practical solutions.

The focus of this volume, conceived as the first of several, is on songs and hand games for infants and toddlers (the author suggests singing the songs during pregnancy, too!). Along with the lovely songs and games, the book includes some eloquent essays on the importance of “tender, gentle, caressing touch” that is “objective” and free of “egotism and self-gratification”; of the power of imitation in the earliest years, of movement; music in the mood of the fifth; singing; the bonding of mother and child *before* birth as well as after; and more.

—Andree T. Ward  
Glöckler, Michaela, **Education as Preventive Medicine: A Salutogenic Approach,**

Rudolf Steiner College Press, 2002, 371 pgs.

Dr. Glöckler, leader of the Medical Section of the School of Spiritual Science, was a school doctor for many years before taking up her present work, and has a particular interest in the interconnections of education and medicine. She has organized conferences all over the world, bringing together educators and physicians to study common themes and to inform and inspire each others’ work.

Astrid Schmitt-Stegmann says in her foreword, “The purpose of this book is to give physicians, teachers, and parents an understanding of Waldorf education as preventive medicine; for what we teach children exerts a strong formative influence on their growing bodies and can therefore promote either health or illness. For this reason, from the beginning of his working with teachers and doctors, Rudolf Steiner pointed out that education must proceed from a consciousness of the child’s health. *How* and *when* something is taught affects a child’s disposition towards health or illness for life” (p. 7).

Dr. Glöckler has gathered together many valuable articles on subjects ranging from school physicians’ tasks, to research on rhythm and physiology, specific school subject areas, and child study methods. But the book is worth reading if only for Dr. Glöckler’s chapter at the end,

“Salutogenesis: Seeking the Source of Health,” which she offers as a new paradigm to replace the current medical paradigm of “pathogenesis,” which is focused on finding and eliminating the sources of illness.

—Andree T. Ward

Göbel, Nana, ed., **Waldorf Education Worldwide: The Development of Waldorf Education including Anthroposophical Curative Education and Social Therapy,** Friends of Waldorf Education, 2001, 208 pgs.

Reminiscent of the classic *Education Towards Freedom*, this new survey of Waldorf education around the world commemorates 30 years of work by the Friends of Waldorf Education, a worldwide association that plays no direct part in education as such, but bears overall responsibility for the whole school movement.

Filled with glowing color, archival and contemporary photos, and thumbnail sketches of teachers and students from around the world, this glorious volume radiates vitality. A stunningly diverse panorama portrays Waldorf education in its essence—living and inspired.

—jes

Hofrichter, Hansjörg, **Waldorf: The Story behind the Name,** Pädagogische Forschungsstelle beim Bund der Freien Waldorfschulen e.v., 2003, 23 pgs.

This history of the name “Waldorf” includes the story of John Jacob Astor, self-made emigrant from the town of Walldorf in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, who made his fortune in the New World. Among his successful enterprises was the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, where Emil Molt and Rudolf Steiner established the first Waldorf school.

The book features some wonderful photos from the 1920s, as well as an interesting discussion of Waldorf schools and the marketplace.

—jes

Oram, Peter, **Seven Stars of Gold: Poems for Children**, Starborn Books, 1995, 57 pgs.

Another collaboration with illustrator Phil Forder. Originally written as birthday or end-of-year verses, the author hopes that each poem in this lovely volume “embodies... a gentle healing gesture, or the image of a threshold to be crossed. They are now released from their original, specific task in the hope that they may be able to provide a little warmth or pleasure, solace or strength, to other young listeners and readers.”

—jes

Seyfert, Werner, **The Design of the Waldorf Classroom**, AWSNA, n.d., 6 pgs.

This article describes a process of observation and investigation leading to a design of a Waldorf school from the inside out. The design process started with the class-

rooms, taking into consideration the spatial demands and relationships of teachers and students: out of all this the space was to be shaped, just as the system of veins has developed out of the circulation of the blood.

Child development suggests different environmental considerations for different age groups.

—jes

**From Nature Stories to Natural Science: A Holistic Approach to Science for Families**, 137 pgs.

**The Magic of Patience: A Jataka Tale. A Short Play Using the Four Temperaments**, 12 pgs.

**Roman History** (Christopher Unit Studies: Main Lessons for Homeschoolers, no. 1), 37 pgs.

All by Donna Simmons, Christopherus Home School Resources, 2003.

Donna Simmons borrows voraciously from the library, and she has put her resource choices to very fine use in these booklets for homeschoolers! Her own Waldorf education, as well as personal experience homeschooling her two boys, are brought to bear here with verve and creativity. Her succinct, accessible presentation of Waldorf education is impressive, and her flexibility and generous spirit will encourage her readers. She includes well-chosen bibliographies, pertinent illustrative quotes from a wide range of Waldorf “experts,” as well

as general homeschooling references.

—jes

### **Anthroposophy—Literature**

Allison, John, **A Way of Seeing: Perception, Imagination, and Poetry**, Lindisfarne Books, 2003, 167 pgs.

Poet John Allison, a former Waldorf teacher, shows here how our everyday imagination can be intensified to become an organ of cognition. He describes a path to true imagination, where *attention* is the key. A combination of attention, equanimity, and assent “opens the world in a new way.”

—jes

Lindgren, Alan, **The Courage of the Flame: Ballads, Sonnets, and Other Gardens of Poetry with Prose Writings**, SunSings Publications, 2003, 196 pgs.

Alan Lindgren is a prolific and dedicated writer, and he published these poems himself—clearly, a labor of love.

—jes

### **Agriculture**

Williams, Carol, **Bringing a Garden to Life**, Bantam Books, 1999, 273 pgs.

For those of us dreaming of warmer days in the garden—while the temperature here in Ghent was 20° below zero—the arrival of this book on the coldest day of January was an unexpected pleasure!

Unlike lavishly-illustrated garden books, this modest manual has only a few black-and-white drawings, as

it focuses not on the finished product, but on the work of gardening itself, for “joy’s soul lies in the doing” (Shakespeare, quoted on p.3).

If you love poetry as well as gardening, this book is for you, the “contemplative” gardener. With chapters on planning, preparing the ground, composting, tools, time, flowers, herbs, and trees, Williams covers all the necessary subjects. Though her approach is not explicitly biodynamic, Williams has drawn much inspiration from biodynamic practices. A ten-page list of references and a five-page index are included.

—jk

### **Biography**

Bayley, John, **Elegy for Iris**, St. Martin’s Press, 1999, 277 pgs.

A loving tribute to the late novelist Iris Murdoch, written by her husband of forty years, when she was still alive and fading away into the fog of Alzheimer’s disease. Bayley writes of their life together: “A young man loves a beautiful maiden who returns his love but she is always disappearing into some unknown and mysterious world about which she will reveal nothing,” describing both the effect of her illness and a long-standing fairytale-like pattern in their marriage.

Reading it, I felt that, as often seems to be the case with Alzheimer’s, the disease both “revealed” and amplified a sense of disconnection from

the self that for most of Murdoch’s life was both hidden and transcended by her intellectual and artistic brilliance, and that is an important mechanism of her bittersweet novels. —ms

### **Christianity—Eastern**

Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, trans. Esther Williams, **Life after Death**, Levadia, Greece, 1996, 157 pgs.

Rooted in the long tradition of Christian psychotherapy (soul care), on the subject of which the author wrote a standard work (*Orthodox Psychotherapy*), this book looks at the nature of death and after-death experiences using mainstream Christian categories of Paradise, Hell, Purgatory, and sin as psychic disease, from a consistently theological point of view.

—ms

### **Christianity—History & Theology**

Carroll, James, **Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews—A History**, Houghton Mifflin, 2001, 756 pgs.

Part history, part memoir, this hefty tome by novelist Carroll traces the record of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism in the Catholic Church, trying to understand how centuries of animus culminated in the Holocaust.

Carroll affectingly traces the development of his own thinking about Judaism. We start with the Catholic seminarian, who knew no Jews and virtually nothing about Judaism, except what he

learned in classrooms, i.e., that Judaism had been superseded by Christ’s new covenant—and we eventually come to the crisis of faith this issue caused in the author’s own life.

It is a fascinatingly detailed history, and was rightly expected to be controversial. Unfortunately, its sheer length and weight almost certainly prevented it from gaining the large readership and sparking the debate the author intended with his dark history of the central tragedy of Western civilization. The Church’s failure to protest the Holocaust—the infamous “silence” of Pius XII—is only part of the story: the death camps, Carroll shows, are the culmination of a long, entrenched tradition.

From Gospel accounts of the death of Jesus on the cross, to Constantine’s transformation of the cross into a sword, to the rise of blood libels, scapegoating, and modern anti-Semitism, Carroll reconstructs the dramatic story of the Church’s conflict not only with Jews but with itself. At the same time he avoids any kind of fatalism. He points at roads that were not taken, heroes forgotten, new roads still to be taken. Demanding that the Church face this past in full, Carroll ends with a call for a fundamental rethinking of the deepest questions of Christian faith. Only then can Christians, Jews, and all who carry the

burden of this history begin to forge a new future. —ms

### **Christianity—Modern**

Fox, Matthew, **Confessions: The Making of a Post-Denominational Priest**, Harper San Francisco, 1996, 301 pgs.

For about 20 years, Matthew Fox was an inspiring Catholic theologian and a sharp thorn in the Vatican's side. A visionary, political activist, and respected teacher, he devoted his career to recovering suppressed, life-affirming traditions within Catholicism for the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the theology he called Creation Spirituality, which includes the belief that we are all born in original blessing. His work was influential in calling attention to the medieval mystics Meister Eckhart and Hildegard von Bingen.

Fox felt strongly that both the earth and the Christian church stand at an epochal crossroads, that one culture is dying as another struggles to be born, based on this theology of original blessing and the Cosmic Christ. Although his superiors in the Dominican order seem to have long resisted the pressure of Roman inquisitors, he was eventually forbidden to speak in public, and then dismissed altogether from his order and the priesthood. No matter how one may feel about his person or theology, the passages relating to his formative years at the time of Vatican II and his dealings with modern-day In-

quisition are quite interesting in their own right. —ms

### **Christianity—Mysticism**

Maguire, Joanne, **Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite de Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls**, SUNY Albany, 2001, 178 pgs.

Nothing much is known about Marguerite de Porete's life, although her writing suggests that she was well versed in courtly literature and in biblical and other religious texts. Her accusers labeled her a Beguine; whether or not she belonged to a community, she lived in the area of Flanders where Beguines were concentrated. In 1306, the *Mirror of Simple Souls* was condemned by a tribunal of 20 theologians, publicly burnt, and its use prohibited under pain of excommunication. The continued distribution of the book and her refusal to take the oath in front of her accusers led to her being declared a relapsed heretic and burnt at the stake in 1310.

The *Mirror of Simple Souls* developed an esoteric doctrine of annihilation, the complete transformative union of the soul in God, of a type previously familiar in Eastern Christianity or Sufism. There is reason to believe that Meister Eckhart was inspired by her, and perhaps knew her personally. Her book was translated and read throughout the centuries as an admirable text by "an unknown French mystic," its author's identity unconfirmed until 1946. —ms

**Christian Mystics—Francis**  
Bobin, Christian, **The Secret of Francis of Assisi: A Meditation**, Shambhala, 1997, 102 pgs.

As its title indicates, this is a low-key, at times elliptic meditation on the virtues of Christian humility, gratitude, and unbounded love for earthly creation. The translation is a bit stilted, marring the original's profound gentleness with touches of spineless evanescence. But Francis manages to hold his own.

—ms

Short, William, **Poverty and Joy: The Franciscan Tradition**, Orbis, 1999, 143 pgs.

Short gathers highlights of the Franciscan tradition, which he characterizes as chaotic and intuitive, creative and affectionate, radical and obedient. This history of the Franciscan movement focuses on key themes of incarnation, suffering, poverty and healing, the harmony of humanity and nature. Short biographies of key figures (Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, Eriugena, Angela Foligno) bring out the characteristic qualities of soul developed in a movement where the virtue of obedience went hand in hand with creativity, intuition, affection, a deliberate radicalism, and cultivated chaos.

—ms

Carney, Margaret, **The First Franciscan Woman: Clare of Assisi and Her Form of Life**, Franciscan Press, 1993, 258 pgs.

Marketed in the “Juvenile” section of the publisher’s catalog, this is too “adult” a book for most “juveniles” of my acquaintance, although the bookworms may enjoy it. But it is a nice rendition of Clare’s life, together with a clear presentation of the Franciscan way of life in Clare’s time and in later periods. It could be good material for a teacher preparing to tell Clare’s biography.

—ms

### **Christianity—Patristic**

Wills, Gary, **Saint Augustine**, Penguin, 1999, 152 pgs.

Gary Wills’s masterly example of the short biography offers a complex and compelling interpretation of Augustine’s life and work. He explores not only the theologian whose formulations were to carry enormous weight in centuries of Western Christianity, but also “the great ruminator about the human condition and the everyday man who set pen to parchment.” Wills demythologizes his subject, showing him to have been more peripheral in his day than we are used to thinking, a provincial on the margins of classical culture, ignorant of Greek at a time when Greek was still the intellectual lingua franca. He suggests that some of Augustine’s reputation for self-righteous pontificating and cantankerous arrogance may have been unjustified, that Augustine was as impa-

tient with his own formulations as he was with those of others. This doesn’t prevent him from describing in rather caustic terms the clever use of all the tricks of the trained Roman rhetorician Augustine employed.

In his close reading of the *Confessions*, Wills observes many more shadings and subtleties of Augustine’s relationship with his mother, his son, and his son’s mother than other biographers have noted. In a similar vein, anyone wanting a quick and accurate overview of the Donatist, Manichean, Academic, and Neoplatonist schools operating in Augustine’s North African homeland could hardly do better than to read Wills’s vivid, dramatic sketches of the various groups and their complex interactions.

His summary of the various interpretations of the *Confessions* is thorough and illuminating, and raises universal questions about the rewards and problems of autobiography. We have here a remarkable analysis and compassionate narrative of a brilliant and flawed individual.

—ms

Berling, Judith A., **Understanding Other Religious Worlds: A Guide for Interreligious Education**, Orbis, 2004, 146 pgs.

This book articulates a learning process to help educators improve approaches to other religious traditions. It distinguishes between learn-

ing facts about other religions and understanding them and their followers holistically.

This creative and well-written book will be a wonderful catalyst for teachers.

—jes

Vaucher, André, **The Spirituality of the Medieval West: The Eighth to the Twelfth Century**, Cistercian Publications, 1993, 182 pgs.

Spirituality as the interface of doctrine and life discipline. Standard books have tended to focus on doctrine, the meditations, ideas, and practices of the clergy. Vaucher traces the influence of rituals, prayers, and devotions in the lives of ordinary people, and in the conquest of the life of the spirit, no longer the elitist privilege of a clerical class.

—ms

### **Eastern**

Sri Aurobindo, **Savitri**, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1973 (4<sup>th</sup> ed.), 816 pgs.

The library has a large collection of the works of Aurobindo—thanks to the encouragement of Robert McDermott, the well-known leader in anthroposophy, who also happens to be an internationally recognized expert on Aurobindo. I had long wanted this poem for our library when, as a surprising gift, the Los Angeles Rudolf Steiner Library gave it to us. As McDermott says, this poem could be a good place to begin Aurobindo’s works. Before dipping in however, I

would suggest reading as introductions to Aurobindo's vast and voluminous works McDermott's *Six Pillars: Introduction to the Major Works of Sri Aurobindo*, and also his *Essential Aurobindo*. I would further highly recommend Satprem's *Sri Aurobindo, or the Adventure of Consciousness*. With these helps one will find *Savitri* a magnificent encompassment of Aurobindo's own ever-deepening spiritual journey, which culminated in his insight into the spiritualization of earthly life.

I would like to mention two other books by Aurobindo that reflect his almost unimaginable insight into the whole of the Indian spiritual teachings:

1) **The Secret of the Veda** (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971, 571 pgs.). The Vedas are the most ancient spiritual writings in the world, and yet if one can get beyond the surface language one finds in them some of the most profound thoughts ever produced on such things as creation, Being and Nothingness, the origins of consciousness, the gods, and language. I would think that anthroposophists would find many resonances here. (Another great book on the Vedas is Raimundo Panikkar's magisterial *The Vedic Experience: Mantramajari*.)

2) The second book by Aurobindo I want to mention is his **Essays on the Gita** (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1974

[1922], 575 pgs.). After having thoughtfully gone through these volumes, I put the challenge to you that Robert McDermott expressed on his first visit to the library over 25 years ago: Could it be that Aurobindo was attempting to do in the East what Rudolf Steiner was doing in the West?

—fp

#### **Eastern—Buddhist**

Dalai Lama, **A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night: A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life**, Shambala, 1994, 141 pgs.

The author explains and amplifies *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, a well-known text of Mahayana Buddhism that aims to show how anyone can develop *bodhichitta*, the wish for perfect enlightenment for the sake of others.

—jes

#### **Education—General**

Golden, Alisa, **Creating Handmade Books**, Sterling, 2000, 160 pgs.

This inspiring book makes impressive works of craft seem within anyone's reach, with its lovely photos, clear instructions, and creative designs that leave lots of room for one's *own* creativity.

—jes

Stiles, David & Jeanie, **Tree Houses You Can Actually Build**, Houghton Mifflin, 1998, 128 pgs.

At home in a tree—a romantic and adventurous notion! Here are plans to evoke

longing and spur initiative; the authors present them in such a way that anything seems possible.

—jes

#### **Fairy Tales**

**Aesop's Fables**, trans. Laura Gibbs, Oxford Univ. Press, 2002, 306 pgs.

**The Complete Fables**, trans. Olivia & Robert Temple, Penguin Books, 1998, 262 pgs.

**Aesop's Fables**, Dover Publications, 1994, 83 pgs.

We have just eliminated a surprising gap in our collection, at the request of many patrons. The first two collections are exhaustive and scholarly; the Penguin edition has a cleaner layout, but the Oxford has the advantage of a thematic arrangement. The Dover edition is brief, and features the "classic," most well-known fables.

—jes

Khan, Noor Inayat, **Twenty Jataka Tales**, 1985, 148 pgs.

Drawn from famous legends concerning the former lives of the Buddha, these tales tell of people and animals moved to acts of sacrifice by the noble example of their fellow creatures. The stories are beautifully illustrated with graceful, delicate pen-and-ink drawings.

—jes

#### **Gnosis**

Bloom, Harold, **Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resur-**

**rection**, Riverhead Books, 1996, 253 pgs.

Bloom traces the origin of American spirituality. The book is worth reading for these two statements alone about American Christianity: “Our aggressive millenarianism has very little to do with Christian humility and can be interpreted as a throwback more to the ancient Iranian sense of being the Chosen People....The healthiest antidote for American millennialism might be a return, by mainline Protestants and Catholics alike, to the theology of Saint Augustine, whose City of God inspired the rejection of millennialism” (p. 222).

Bloom covers in an engaging manner angels, dreams, near-death experiences, and millennialism.

—Mark Riccio

### **History—Medieval**

Fichtenau, Heinrich, **Heretics and Scholars in the High Middle Ages 1000-1200**, Penn State Univ., 1998, 403 pgs.

The past forty years have witnessed a continuous revisiting of our views on medieval religion. Over the decades the portrait of the heretics has become increasingly textured, the continuity of “heretic” social and religious movements through the centuries and their fluidity across political borders increasingly well-documented. In the process, there has been a tendency to

amalgamate the different currents of heresy.

Twelfth-century theological debates have also been relativized; they were seen, not always incorrectly, but one-sidedly, as secondary characteristics of the “real” phenomenon: political-economical oppression. Heresy, in that reading, might appear as the religious mask of the struggle for ethnic identities; proto-feminism; or as populist resistance to feudalism, papacy, or monarchy. Fichtenau, considered one of the great medievalists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had a longstanding interest in social and intellectual dissidence. In this book, he successfully undertakes to break through dichotomies, illuminating both the commonalities and the differences between intellectual and popular religion.

—ms

Liu, Xinru, **Silk and Religion: An Exploration of Material Life and the Thought of People AD 600-1200**, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998, 236 pgs.

Xinru Liu’s examination of the impact of religion on the silk trade enlarges upon his earlier work on the interaction between commerce and religion, extending it to the Middle East and Europe, taking into account the market links of the pre-Islamic Persian religion, as well as those of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. During the period in question, silk evolved from

a luxury item to a commodity. Religious institutions, somewhat surprisingly, contributed substantially to this transition.

—ms

### **Literature**

Stevens, Wallace, **The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens**, Vintage, 1990, 534 pgs.

Readers have Gertrude Reif Hughes to thank for this addition to the library. Her talk last fall at the Nature Institute included a discussion of Stevens’s “The Snowman,” which has resonated through this long winter, and inspired me to explore further this writer who has been called “the best and most representative American poet of our time.”

—jes

### **Nutrition**

Katz, Sandor Ellix, **Wild Fermentation: The Flavor, Nutrition, and Craft of Live-Culture Foods**, Chelsea Green, 2003, 187 pgs.

This *book* is wild, in the best sense of the word! Charreuse, hot pink, and black graphics on the cover proclaim the presence of joyful liveliness within. Beautifully written by a thoughtful and creative author, recipes for both basic (yogurt, sourdough bread, miso) and exotic (Cherokee sour corn drink, ginger champagne, sunflower sour cream) foods will enable readers to revitalize their nourishment. In doing so, the author assures us that we will



also strengthen our connection with, and appreciation for, the transformative, alchemical processes in nature.

—jes

### **Occult**

Tolle, Eckhart, **The Power of NOW: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment**, New World Library, 1999, 191 pgs.

In spite of the vast popularity of Tolle's work, this volume is a serious exercise book: "Ceasing to create pain in the present and dissolving past pain—this is what I want to talk about now." Tolle writes that the first step to enlightenment is to stop identifying with the egoic mind and to honor and accept the NOW, because the more you are able to do so, the more you free yourself from the limitations of your "pain body."

The book develops a discussion on the "nature of man," and is written in question-and-answer style reminiscent of Neale Walsch's *Conversations with God*, or Osho's books. Here are ample discussions about time, relationships, and illness. One could argue that the book contains little original thought, but Tolle states the concepts clearly, and in a way others haven't.

—Mark Riccio

### **Occult—Reincarnation**

Smith, Edward Reaugh, **The Soul's Long Journey: How the Bible Reveals Reincar-**

**nation**, SteinerBooks, 2003, 349 pgs.

The third book in Ed Smith's series, "envisioned as a complete Bible commentary based upon the anthroposophical understanding given to humanity by Rudolf Steiner" (the first two are *The Burning Bush* and *David's Question*).

This volume shows that reincarnation is deeply and firmly revealed in the Bible—and the author states that there are many places in the Bible that can only be adequately understood in the light of the reality of reincarnation.

The depth and detail of these works is great, and the first two volumes circulate constantly. Our patrons will welcome this new leg of a profound journey.

—jes

### **Philosophy—Greek**

Long, A.A., (ed.), **The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy**, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 427 pgs.

Assuming no previous knowledge of the subject, this book is both a very accessible guide for general readers and an excellent survey of recent scholarship and new perspectives for more advanced readers. Early Ionian cosmologists; Pythagoras; Heraclitus; Parmenides; Zeno; Empedocles; Anaxagoras; the atomists; and the sophists are all discussed both as individuals and collectively in chapters on rational theology, epistemology, psychology, rhetoric,

relativism, justice, and poetics. A chapter on causality extends the focus to include historians and medical writers.

The book clearly situates the groundbreaking nature of the *Parmenides* at the forefront of a metaphysical viewpoint that, by appealing to "a priori" principles, breaks out of the strictly empirical methodology of the earlier cosmologists and paves the way for the development of inferential methods. There are well-organized chapters on epistemology and psychology; philosophy and poetics; philosophy and sophism; *physis* and logos; logos and myth; practical politics and law, etc. The last chapter makes a forceful case for the role of poetic language in early Greek philosophy, and provides useful keys to its interpretation.

—ms

### **Renaissance—Shakespeare**

Bloom, Allen, **Shakespeare on Love and Friendship**, University of Chicago Press, 1993, 159 pgs.

Bloom's synoptic treatment of eros through the prism of Shakespeare's vast tableaux of the human spirit examines the writer's contribution to our lives in a love-impooverished world. Bloom describes Shakespeare's rich vision of the permanent elements in human nature and experience, and his deep awareness that "high" and "low" are always mixed—this makes for the peculiar quality

of his evocations of love, which are never high-minded, yet never vulgar.

—ms

Greenblatt, Stephen, **Hamlet in Purgatory**, Princeton University Press, 2001, 318 pgs.

At the center of Hamlet's life there is grief—grief at losing his father, and a still deeper grief at the “illegitimacy” of this grief, the result of his particular circumstances: a lustful, widowed mother, a power-greedy uncle, and a neurotic character that makes it improper to attract attention to the father's death or the son's disconsolate state. Greenblatt says Hamlet is an example of Shakespeare's response to a drastic change in how Northern European cultures treated grief and mourning. Specifically, purgatory was eliminated, together with its elaborate system of intercession by human and heavenly intermediaries dedicated to praying for souls' speedy rescue.

The struggle to reform the theological and ritual treatment of life after death was as central to the Protestant Reformation as were the fight against the Pope or the rejection of transubstantiation. From the conception of purgatory, a whole economy had arisen in which prayers, fasts, almsgiving and memorial Masses, etc., constituted valuable and increasingly expensive commodities. Purgatory was no mean thing. Suddenly,

the emotion, grief, and theatricality that purgatory had harbored were homeless; they needed “a local habitation and a name.”

“They needed Hamlet” and Shakespeare's historical plays, which Greenblatt presents as disguised appeals for the audience's prayers. Citing the sudden, numerous appearances of ghosts in the theater during the fifty years following the Reformation, and arriving at Hamlet and the historical plays, the author shows how the end of purgatory freed an immense body of imaginative materials and emotions for the theater.

Even when at times it feels as if Greenblatt is milking his theme dry, there is no denying the pleasure I received from this virtuosic conjuring up of Shakespeare the conjurer, made perhaps more affecting by the author's description early in the book of his and his father's relations to death and mourning.

—ms

#### Science—Ecology

Findhorn Community (foreword by Sir George Trevelyan), **The Findhorn Garden: Pioneering a New Vision of Humanity and Nature in Cooperation**, Findhorn Press, 1975, 196 pgs.

People have assumed this book was part of our collection for some time—perhaps it once was! In response to requests, this “classic” is now available from the library. Not simply an artifact, *The Find-*

*horn Garden* is like an informative scrapbook, with photos both archival and artistic; narrative history; essays; interviews; and deva communications.

—jes

#### Science—Technology

Noble, David F., **The Religion of Technology: The Divinity of Man and the Spirit of Invention**, Penguin, 1999, 228 pgs.

This book traces the seemingly incompatible realms of religion and technology starting in medieval Europe. “Technology became identified with...renewed perfection and imminent salvation.” Joachim Fiore provided Europe with a millenarian prophecy/vision in which an order of “monks” would bring about spiritual illumination and free humankind from its misery through teaching. Noble follows this type of thought from Christian thinkers to Freemasons to the Royal Society to our present-day NASA scientists and geneticists.

Although readers may be familiar with some of the topics presented, the book never fails to surprise with quotes, discussions, and connections of events and ideas usually taken for granted, e.g., “The Christian community at NASA is not a minority: it is very significant, and NASA people are very outspoken about being Christians.” Noble thoroughly explains the cult of technology and Chris-

tian fundamentalism. Simply  
a great book.

—Mark Riccio

Weber, Samuel, **Mass Media:  
Form Technics Media**, Stanford University  
Press, 1996, 247 pgs.

A scholarly discussion of  
the relationship of aesthetics  
to the rise of media.

—Mark Riccio

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