

Book Reviews

Philip P. Arnold and Ann Grodzins Gold (eds), *Sacred Landscapes and Cultural Politics: Planting a Tree.*

Vitality of Indigenous Religions Series, Aldershot; Burlington, USA; Singapore; Sydney, Ashgate, 2001, pp xix + 203; 6 b/w illustrations. ISBN 0754615693

This volume grew out of a symposium, 'Religion/Environment/ Action: Conceptions and Connections,' which was held in 1996 to celebrate the centenary of the Department of Religion at Syracuse University. This symposium featured a tree planting ceremony conducted by Chief Jake Swamp, who was born on the Akwesasne Mohawk reservation in upstate New York, and is the founder of the Tree of Peace Society. The volume is an attempt to mesh together contemporary ritual, indigenous worldviews, academic papers and less academic environmental activist writings. As such, it is a very mixed bag indeed.

The challenging and problematic opening paper, Lynda Sexson's 'Isaac and the Elk: Nature's Unnatural Acts,' makes clear that this is no conventional collection of papers. Sexson aims to "decipher this mythical book that is America" in order to "detect a source of our ecological crisis as performance of our deeply iconoclastic stories" (3). To achieve this end she proposes the figures of the Biblical Isaac, representing human, textual approaches, and the Elk, representing nature. She examines, through the lens of these figures cosmogony, code, cartography and conquest. As with much of the book, the good intentions which inform this paper shine, but the argument is more difficult to follow. However, this essay is original and 'in your face' and therefore a fitting start.

John Rennie Short's 'Alternative Geographies: From Cosmography to Geography' is a much less original and less satisfying potted history of certain seminal figures in the evolution of Western science (Ptolemy, Kepler, Newton) stressing that they had occult interests, which is then connected to the re-emergence of New Age-influenced "alternative geographies" (33). This is definitely well-trodden territory, and the paper is merely expository, as no interesting conclusions are drawn from the existence of such diverse viewpoints. Short does not consider the epistemological status of any of this material, nor does he evaluate what its existence means.

Part I, 'Contested Cultural Politics,' concludes with Jane Marie Law's 'Of Tee Shirts and Tree Seedlings: The Hidden Problems with Religion and the Environment Dialogues.' This essay is a more personal piece, almost the first half detailing an anti-logging protest in Kalispell, Montana, in the late 1980s. The final ten pages look at 'religious' attitudes to nature, concentrating on Japanese Buddhism and Shinto, Law's area of professional expertise. She avoids simple solutions, noting that "[h]olding a non-western religious tradition up as an alternative and an answer to environmental degradation is not simply naïve, it can

be counter-productive” (43), and, later “Why then is there such a disparity between what is clearly a nature-centric religious ethos in Japan and around the world at the hand of Japanese multinationals?” (45). Law does not offer facile solutions, and her sensitive, personal analysis is very interesting and arresting.

Part II, ‘Once and Future Sacred Landscapes’ features case studies from Africa and India. Alfonso Peter Castro and Adelle Tibbetts’ ‘Sacred Landscape of Kirinyaga: Indigeous and Early Islamic and Christian Influences’ is significant in that it undercuts the ‘New Age’ and politically correct tendency to view ‘nature’ as always benign, nurturing and gentle. There is an extended discussion of the role of sacred trees in the Kirinyaga world-view, and a historical trajectory is traced with the coming of Muslim and Christian colonialists. The authors warn against stereotyping indigenous belief systems as well: “[i]t also bears mentioning that indigenous Gikuyu religious beliefs and practices more closely resembled humanistic rather than biocentric worldviews. That is, they viewed people — including ancestors and future generations — and their needs as taking precedence over the ecosystem or nature” (61-2). This essay very comprehensively analyses Kirinyaga’s sacred landscape and the changes in perception of it that different groups brought.

Part III, ‘Planting a Tree,’ opens with the text of the tree-planting ceremony mentioned above. In addition to celebrating ecological principles, the ceremony remembered the thirty-five Syracuse University students who had died when Pan Am Flight 103 blew up over Lockerbie, Scotland due to a terrorist bomb (there were 258 on board, all of whom died). This is an emotional piece, illustrated by six photographs of the ceremony by Anna M. Schein.

The final paper is Philip P. Arnold’s ‘Sacred Landscapes of New York State and the Problem of Religion in America’ which considers Haudenosaunee ideas about sacred place and landscape in heavily populated areas. Native American activists express grief for the loss of the landscape to modern construction and occupation. “For the Haudenosaunee grief clogs ones throat with a lump so large that genuine speech is obstructed, grief blocks the ears so hearing is impaired, and clouds ones eyes with tears making vision and future sight blurred” (168). Rekindling connection to sacred land is one method of alleviating this crippling grief. Arnold reviews the contributions of various Native American speakers at the symposium, those who did not write formal papers for this volume. Sections II and III of the paper, ‘What is American Religion?’ and ‘Becoming American’ throw down the gauntlet to those European generated views of religion which privilege texts, belief or ideology, and utopian goals, insisting that truly American religion must include the materiality, oral tradition, nature-orientation, and practices of Native Americans to be whole and to heal the grief of the nation.

In conclusion, this is an adventurous book which, like the curate’s egg, is ‘good in parts.’ The quality of the papers is uneven, and the insistence by the authors on a ‘heart on their sleeves’ approach can occasionally grate. However, the positives — that there is interesting and challenging new material within it, and that it is pleasingly combative on a number of fronts and therefore sure to generate

debate — mean that it's worth the political correctness, tortuous language and arguments, and moments of sentimentality.

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Edward Bailey, *Implicit Religion: An Introduction.*
Centre for Study of Implicit Religion and Contemporary Spirituality,
Middlesex University Press, 1998, pp v + 113.
ISBN 1898253242

This short monograph introduces the concept of 'implicit religion' and takes three chapters to describe its meaning, then offers three case studies of how it works in the pub, the suburb, and as an individual phenomenon. Bailey's discussion of 'Implicit religion' begins with the consideration of transcendent experiences, absolute values, and religious experiences. Bailey asserts that these experiences contribute to implicit religion, as do questions about the expectations and goals of individuals and groups. He is aware that 'implicit religion' is a term which may offend, particularly those who regard themselves as without religion. He also insists that the term 'refers to "religiosity," in general, rather than to its expression in any particular form of religion, or even in any particular type of religion' (15).

Chapter 3, 'What does 'Implicit Religion' Mean?,' notes that there has been considerable difficulty defining 'religion,' and also that implicit religion is not merely the secular parallels of religious activities. In offering suggestions as to its meaning, Bailey considers peoples' commitments, their integrating foci, and extensive effects. This suggests that a commitment may lead to the integrating and focusing of an individual or a group, and there will then be consequences or effects in their lives.

Chapter 4, 'What is closest to Implicit Religion?,' examines civil religion, popular religion, 'folk religion,' and invisible religion. This chapter is disappointing, as the exposition of civil religion consists merely of quotations from Robert Bellah's classic (1966) essay 'Civil Religion in America,' almost six pages in length. It would have been better, in such an introductory book, to have efficiently summarised and paraphrased Bellah's essay. The next two areas are much more briefly covered, then the discussion of 'invisible religion' consists of nearly eight pages of lengthy quotations from Thomas Luckmann's book "The Invisible Religion" (1967). This extensive use of quotations is sloppy work, and it significantly decreases the readability of this book, which up to this point had been quite accessible.

The second section of the book, chapters 5 to 7, examines the application of the concept of 'implicit religion' in the lives of individuals, the pub, and the suburbs. The first section reports the results of survey data which the author began collecting in 1968. The questions included 'What do you enjoy most in life?' and 'If you won a lot of money on the pools, what would you do with it?' (45). People

responded very positively and some interviewees spent several hours responding to Bailey's queries. From these responses Bailey extracts themes, and hence identifies commitments, noting the central role of the Self for most respondents.

In the second section, the focus shifts to a pub, built in 1939 and one mile from the centre of Bristol. Bailey identified seven 'integrating foci': the idea of the pub; the physical structure of the pub; the door dividing the two sides of the pub; the bar; the 'busy time' of the evening; the Manager; and the 'transaction' of giving the drink in return for the money (which incorporates notions of hospitality and is more than the economics of the situation). The third section, considering the suburbs, uses material collected by Bailey when he was Rector of the parish of Winterbourne, near Bristol, in the 1970s.

The final two chapters assess the importance of 'implicit religion,' firstly by comparing implicit religion with 'explicit' religion, insisting that any definition of religion which is commensurate only with 'explicit' religion is gravely lacking. This chapter also considers the relation of 'spirituality' to religion, both implicit and explicit. Chapter 10, 'The Future and Implicit Religion,' is a brief three pages, and not surprisingly predicts a lively future for implicit religion. Pages 81-89 at the end contain three appendices regarding the survey data, and including a brief (four page) list of suggested further reading.

In conclusion, this is a solid introductory volume which sketches broad concepts rather than fills in finer details. It is plainly written and generally easy to comprehend, and will be of use to those in the field of Religion Studies who are introducing their students to a range of ideas concerning 'secular religion.'

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Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality: An Exploration.*

trans. John Bowden, London, New York, Continuum, 2001, pp ix +117.
ISBN 0826456847

This book is an interesting example of the use of 'spirituality' in the strict and correct sense — the spiritual tradition and practices, the charism collective and personal, of a specific religious group. But it is unusual in that it written by a lay member of a Third Order, concerned with making that tradition viable in the modern world. It focuses on a spirituality that finds the presence of God in the world.

Borgman argues that, from the beginning, Dominican spirituality was flexible and adaptive, seeking and questioning, not a fixed rule of life. However, he somewhat grudgingly admits that this was not always so. He slides past the role of Dominicans as inquisitors, leaders of crusades against heresy, protagonists of a rigid Catholic orthodoxy, the *Domini canes*, 'hounds of the Lord,' and that from their very beginnings.

Nevertheless, a spirituality is an idealization, an ideal, not necessarily exemplified by the lives of all individuals who choose to follow a particular tradition:

Dominican spirituality is a living reality today; it is handed on (or distorted) by Dominicans living now, who reshape the Dominican story here and now with an eye to the situation in the world and the church, the cultural historical situation of the moment (95).

This involves judgements about “the cultural historical situation of the moment” that will be influenced by cultural, political and personal factors. A Lacordaire, Congar or Schillebeeckx will necessarily interpret the Dominican charism differently to a Torquemada, or even the founder, Domingo de Guzmán. Over time, understanding even of fundamental implications of the group’s mission — preaching (it is, after all, the ‘Order of Preachers’), contemplation, service of the church changes.

One interesting example of this process of development is the role of women in the Dominican order. Dominic himself preached to women, founded his first monastic house for women and encouraged a female branch of the order. From the beginning, however, many leading Dominicans opposed the proliferation of their convents. Borgman quotes one early attack on “whores and frivolous girls” who “cut off their hair and put on the habit without supervision,” and notes that Dominican nuns were denied by church law the right to preach, the *raison d’être* of the order. Today, Dominican nuns teach and perform social work while married lay women belong to the third order.

The issue of ‘third orders’ and other lay groups with a strict or loose affiliation to a religious order also raises the question of the wider influence of spiritual traditions, their adaptation to lay life, the ‘householder’ of the Indian tradition of the Buddhist lay devotee of the Chinese tradition. Religious families have adopted as well as full members.

For all its highly personal style, its exploratory nature as the sub-title suggests, *Dominican Spirituality* is a thorough exposition of the history and current situation of one of the major Catholic traditions of spirituality. It has a full bibliography and a fascinating appendix by one who is arguably the most important living Dominican theologian, Edward Schillebeeckx, who describes his religious ‘family’ in terms of affection, wry humour and an insider’s insight.

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Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas. Versions of Thomism.*
 Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2002, pp viii + 254.
 ISBN 0631213120 (hbk); 0631213139 (pbk)

Up until the 1960s it was mandatory for Roman Catholic ordinands to study four years of theology from textbooks that claimed allegiance to the thought of the thirteenth century Dominican friar, Thomas Aquinas. Usually, however, students were referred to the actual text of Aquinas only in passing; they were inducted into a derived system of thought. The underlying thought system was known as Neo-Thomism, imposed on all Roman Catholic seminaries and institutes of higher learning in 1879 by Pope Leo XIII, even though it pre-dated him. His pontificate continued the struggle of his predecessor, Pius IX, against the erosion of papal power and influence and the restoration of the philosophy and theology of Aquinas was seen as integral to this endeavour. It was more than a purely cognitive decision. While the study of Thomas Aquinas has never been an exclusively Roman Catholic pastime, it has certainly been a broad distinguishing feature between Catholic and Protestant thought.

Neo-Thomism was constructed during the nineteenth century in order to resist the influence of the philosophies of Descartes, Kant and Hegel on Catholic theology. It would, it was thought, protect the Roman Catholic church against the errors of these new philosophical trends in thought and demonstrate that no contradiction existed between the teaching of the church and the findings of modern science. But, in its turn, it split into dissenting factions in the twentieth century. There were those, such as Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan, who saw no reason why modern philosophy (such as Kant's) could not be integrated with Neo-Thomism. They became known generally as Transcendental Thomists. On the other hand, there were scholars such as Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain who eschewed such contact with the moderns and concentrated on the definition of God as *ipsum esse subsistens* (subsistent existence), so that their faction became known as Existential Thomism.

The author, Fergus Kerr, has been around for a long time. He was brought up in Neo-Thomism and has lectured and written on it for most of his life. This book is an amalgam of disparate writings, papers and studies on Aquinas over a long period. For this reason we can forgive him some lack of order and some repetition. He is well known around both Oxford and Edinburgh as a solid theologian and he edits the Dominican journal *New Blackfriars*.

Neo-Thomism was considered within the Roman Catholic church to be the theological synthesis par excellence. When I studied theology at the Angelicum university in Rome some forty years ago, I would take my heavily annotated *Summa Theologiae* to lectures (delivered in Latin) where I heard devoted Dominicans defend their fellow friar's achievement with lectures which were often little more than a re-reading of the text with a neo-Thomist commentary. I recall one Dominican, almost in tears, recount in 1964 that, whereas the Council of Trent had enshrined the Bible and Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* prior to each of its formal sessions, Vatican II had only enshrined the Bible. He attributed the poor

quality of debate and statements coming from the latter Council to this reprehensible decision. The same lecturer accosted me as I finally left the Angelicum to go and do Biblical Studies under the Jesuits, and reminded me not to forget Aquinas even at the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Even then I thought it all rather hilarious.

Those days are well gone, and Kerr is not trying to bring them back. His book is, however, a revisionist understanding of Aquinas' writings. He tells us that, against the previous wisdom that Aquinas' writings achieved the highpoint of a Christian synthesis of theology, his work "reveals a loose-endedness in its constantly repeated discussions of finally unresolvable problems." In this regard, Kerr has some interesting asides about the context in which the *Summa Theologiae* would have been written. In fact, in his opinion, it was not written primarily for the *periti* working in the universities, but for his brother Dominican friars who would be going out to preach from their priories. It was not intended to answer all the deep problems of theology but to provide these friars with an understanding of human morality. In short, Kerr finds that Aquinas' writings contain "Janus-like ambiguities," giving rise understandably to diverse interpretations, as he explains in this wonderful paragraph:

Working out a doctrine of God and of creation in conjunction with Jewish and Islamic metaphysics, a Latin theologian in the new university environment referring all the time to great monastic theologians of the Eastern Church, a Catholic theologian haunted by Catharist dualism, more concerned to protect the faith of friends in the arts faculty against Islamized Aristotelianism than to avoid alarming his colleagues in divinity with his Aristotelian insights... (210).

Kerr wants to ensure that Aquinas is adjudged not by the misinterpretations of some neo-Thomists but by his own work. Controversially, for example, he claims that the God whose existence Aquinas proved by the Five Ways was not other than the God revealed by Christian revelation; that Aquinas' teachings on the Trinity and Christology still have something of value to contribute to theological debates on those topics today; that Aquinas' understanding of the 'natural law' is not what some modern Popes have appropriated in their own writings.

While the book has appeal to someone like myself whose youth was caught up in these debates and who enjoys with some nostalgia Kerr's original and creative thought and defence of Aquinas, there are others who could well benefit from reading it. In the objective study of the history of ideas, Neo-Thomism has to be given a place. It was, in the beginning, the agent of a political strategy envisaged by Leo XIII and his entourage. But, subsequently it was of enormous importance in the formation of Roman Catholic thinking up to the 1960s and had an influence on some epoch-making events. Paul VI in publishing his tragic encyclical on birth control, *Humanae Vitae*, thought that he was writing in the mainstream of Thomistic thought. John Paul II's doctoral thesis was written under the most conservative neo-Thomist imaginable, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, who dominated neo-Thomist thought in Rome for some fifty years. As an historical fact, that must count. Much of the early clamor over the drafts presented

to the first session of Vatican II was over the acceptance of Thomism as the norm for debate.

Kerr's work indirectly shows how influential Neo-Thomism has been and that, almost as a reaction, there has been a revival of interest (the book's blurb speaks of "the major revival of interest," but I think that is an exaggeration) in the original Aquinas writings, almost as a reaction.

In the end, however, the book will appeal to a limited readership. A knowledge of Latin on the part of the reader is certainly preferable. The author or his editor has worked in translations of most Latin phrases, but it must be said that the English sadly does not always capture the Latin subtlety. However, the book is well written and will hold the interested reader's attention.

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Ashok Kumar Malhotra, *An Introduction to Yoga Philosophy: An Annotated Translation of the Yoga Sutras.*

Aldershot, Ashgate, 2001 pp 120; 18 b/w illustrations.

0754605647 (hbk); 0754605248 (pbk).

"Depending upon one's background and intentions, Yoga has something for everyone," (3) argues the introduction to this book. It is a major advantage of yoga, but makes it difficult to know what to look for or what is possible. The variety of ways of approaching yoga is confusing for the Western mind, not used to the culture of India that is pervaded by yoga. It is very easy to become sidetracked or gain a far too limited understanding of this age-old discipline. Occidental yoga classes turn it into a gymnastics, a guru devotion, meditators sometimes drop the physical practice altogether, and books on yoga are often loaded with abstruse details of cosmology or technicalities about postures that drown the beginner. Dr Ashok Malhotra aims to remedy this situation by presenting an inter-disciplinary picture of Yoga:

As a body of knowledge about the mysterious nature of existence and a practical method to realize this wisdom here and now, Yoga offers an integral approach [...] Yoga brings together the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, science and religion [...] providing unique yet related ways of unravelling the mystery of human existence. [...] Yoga is one of the most ancient and enduring disciplines of India, [...] and a path of salvation as well (3).

The author grew up in India and "studied the text under the tutelage of a guru. He presented its content to the class as if it were written for undergraduate students. [...] Learning the Yoga Sutras in this fashion was an exciting venture" (viii). With such an experience, is it any wonder that Dr Malhotra now teaches the sutras at the State University of New York?

The format of the book is meant to facilitate a critical and interdisciplinary understanding of yoga, particularly in its first part, which addresses it from an intellectual point of view. Western practical applications are also reviewed, and a glossary at the end helps to develop familiarity with the words common in yogic literature. For most non-Western traditions, the ancient texts used as foundational reference are rarely easy to find or to grasp at beginner level, and one usually has to rely on second-hand explanations. Here, the second part provides direct access to the aphorisms of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, which systematised the discipline nearly two and half millennia ago. They are rendered in a new translation with an easy, contemporary Western style, and essential meanings are highlighted in commentaries that are consistent with humanistic and transpersonal psychologies. In keeping with the multi-dimensional goal of the book, the third section links yoga to medicine and presents an empirically 'observable and verifiable' part of yoga: the postures. A sampling of postures and breathing exercises, explained and with photos, gives an introduction to the physical practice. Its preamble, concerning cleansing, nourishment, breath, life force, and meditation, is consistent with the holistic interest in body-mind integration and the quest for the 'whole person.' The last part follows the current rise of the relational, metaphorical and connective brand of culture, and presents an entertaining yet interesting comparison of the series of movies entitled 'Star Wars' with the yogic tradition, pointing out archetypes. It is called 'Yoga and Yoda.'

One of the important aspects of yoga and of all major spiritual disciplines is to help a person become self-reflective and engage in self-inquiry. When this happens, says Malhotra, one becomes a philosopher, reflecting not just on oneself, but on humanity and its knowledge and possibly in particular its spiritual traditions. The philosophical attitude of a student of yoga, then, entails "examining critically assumptions, concepts and goals of her discipline," and becoming interested in the "definition, meaning, methods and goals of yoga" (5).

Yoga in general has a strong tradition of guru-student relationship that has often resulted in a limitation of the intellectual reflection of the student. The New Age has picked that up and developed a tendency to reject the intellect altogether as being an impairment to relationship and to spirituality. This presentation of yoga as a complete discipline, and discussing its concepts, goals and methods in a rigorous manner, restores the knowledge development aspect of yoga. It is good to see an author interested in popularising this aspect, also suited to academic study. Related discussions of the philosophical traditions attached to yoga (here, only the Samkhya worldview is detailed) can be found in Swami R. Muni (1993) and Muller, M. (1916). The psychological aspect is presented in the chapter on science, a science of the inner world.

These two chapters could also have been developed in a reverse manner. First, the critical thinking of philosophy does not apply only to external or abstract worldviews and systems, but also to one's own unconscious mental system of thought and thinking processes. Beyond becoming critical and holistic, thinking can develop into synthetic thinking, 'meta-thinking,' and integral thinking, with a

final 'return' to intuition and insight . What is called the 'path of knowledge,' an important interpretation of yoga little developed here, includes such changes.

Second, 'scientific observation,' in its systematic observation, is not limited to a psychological reading of bodily signs of agitation or stress that leads to catharsis, and a goal of moral and spiritual self-control by mind. This popular interpretation of yoga and of many other disciplines, including the medical relationship body-mind, grew from nineteenth century psycho-philosophy and later humanist psychology, and is a major influence in psychosomatics and terminal disease treatment by mental visualisation. However, the inverse also exists: emotional and mental states reflect what is happening in the body 'in the first place,' and in one's life, but this does not have to be limited to 'effects on human personality.' It can involve perception, bodily sensations, subtle signs of developing illness, and new meanings for pain, excitements or addictions.

There is a growing body of research concerning the effects of yogic 'kryias' on endocrine, nervous and immune functions, and on autonomic control. These exercises combining postures, hand gestures, meditation, mantras etc. are now used in the physical treatment of illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease. Such approaches are restoring a little of the original effects sought in the body through yogic practice, for health. Nutrition science also reacts to the idea that 'it's all in the mind' or that mind control can solve everything, and western herbal medicine research is correlating its knowledge with, among others, Ayurvedic medicine, an ancient branch of yoga for health. The three psychophysical types — raja, sattva, tamas (the three 'gunas') — described here in psychological terms, are also used as body types in Ayurvedic medicine. The shift toward mental and psychological interpretations has occurred in all traditions and science itself has widened its scope to include human, 'subjective' sciences, although not yet the body sensations that cannot be observed by an outside physician. Either the science or practical chapters could have entered into more detail concerning the body. It seems to me that the 'whole person' cannot afford to be biased toward only one of these attitudes, and neither can a self-inquiry call itself 'scientific,' these days, without integrating the two.

One obliterated concept is that of Kundalini, the 'rise' of life energy in advanced meditation, which can have physically difficult consequences to the point that a medical 'Kundalini Syndrome' has been defined (Greyson, 1993). Physical manifestations also include 'spontaneous yoga,' which seems forgotten in the literature, except for a description in Muni (1993). It relates to a different attitude toward subtle sensations and stems from another perspective. 'Chakra' is also a term of importance (e.g. Johari, 1987, a short but complete classic on the psychological development correlated with yogic charkras). Siddha and tantric forms of yoga, 'white' or 'red' might also have been mentioned since the tradition of esoteric pursuit is far from negligible in yoga and has given rise to a widespread style of New Age practice. I believe that dismissing such interests as those of 'curiosity seekers' does little justice to the scientific study of 'anomalies' in human experience or to kindness toward the varieties of ways humans have to live their lives and religions, even if anti-intellectualism and lack of rigour plagues this very

subjective domain. Although the major concern of the tradition of yoga is self-realisation, other aspects have always, it seems, been also part of the tradition. It is, in itself, interesting to wonder why.

The above limitations arise from the ‘perspectival bias’ in Malhotra’s work, which he has not mentioned, and is rooted in an assumption of the ‘mind-over-body’ variety (or over matter). It is part of a general paradigm focused on the mind as opposed to the body and translates into a personal perspective on life. It is interested in transcendence rather than immanence, and interprets yogic models of ‘development’ in terms of evolutionary levels of structures of consciousness (e.g. Wilber, 1985) — not the only interpretation possible. None of these are inherent to yoga, which arose from a different perspective, before Patanjali systematised it. The mind perspective is a justified reaction to the materialistic assumption that denatured the immanent paradigm, but tends to ignore the body.

Perspectives also colour translations and interpretations. Compare, for example, the translation given for the fundamental yogic triad *Sat Chit Ananda* (“Infinite existence, consciousness, joy” [13]), to other translations: “eternal being, pure consciousness, infinite beatitude,” “wisdom, joyous creative impulse, bliss.” Such variations make it very difficult and confusing to apprehend what the words actually mean, and yet translators rarely are even aware of their translation bias. A study of religious perspectives is beyond an introductory book on yoga, but mention of them could open undergraduate intellects or satisfy the thirst of spiritual seekers for a wide-ranging approach to the traditions of yoga. It is becoming, in my view, necessary for academic study, as cross-disciplinary research practices develop and are no longer limited to fields such as compared religions. Some more references to offer various directions might have been useful.

This widening being suggested, any perspective has every right to be expressed. It is the rising need for cross-field correlation of knowledge that makes the clear statement of an author’s perspective and the opening toward other perspectives so useful. It is fair to say, that this book already does widen the usual presentations of yoga. Malhotra’s translation of Patanjali’s aphorisms, biased as any interpretation may be, seems in line with current scholarly translations and is eminently readable.

Particularly enjoyable and well suited to the rising metaphor paradigm is the comparison of Star Wars and Yoga. I hope other authors venture into bringing ‘common culture’ together with traditions: archetypes are everywhere.

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Endnote

Readers interested in the development of perspectives and paradigms, as applied to psychology, medicine and spirituality, and of higher types of cognitive abilities, rarely mentioned, may contact me: I developed a model to classify them and can provide some references <mbouchon@ozemail.com.au>.

**Michael Rosenak, *Tree of Life, Tree of Knowledge: Conversations with Torah,* Oxford, Westview Press, 2001, pp 382.
ISBN 0813365619**

According to the sleeve notes on the back of this book the author “is the world’s preeminent philosopher of Jewish education.” Michael Rosenak is Emeritus Mandel Professor of Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, a fellow of the Mandel School for Educational Leadership and recipient of the 2001 Rothberg Prize in Jewish Education. But don’t expect a work dense with specialist theory, cross-referencing and footnotes nodding in all directions. Rosenak is a top academic because he is a great educator, not (as I, at least, have come to expect) the other way around (a ‘great educator’ because he is a top academic).

This is a book that can be read by parents. There is no jargon and no trendy theoretical nonsense in it. The tone is conversational, as the subtitle suggests, but the conversation is intelligent and interesting. Rosenak brings Torah and traditional commentary to life. This is no easy task. Looking at a Torah passage, which is far more ancient and, on the face of it, more difficult, than the Gospel, or reading the midrash (commentary) on the passage, I was often left wondering how this was going to illustrate and illuminate the contemporary educational issue which was the point of the discussion. For instance, the story of Jacob and Esau is used to elucidate strategies by which Jewish self-identity can happily co-exist with worldly wisdom. The account in Exodus of the pitching of the tents, of how many tents and where they were pitched, is used to decide whether or not scientific inquiry is inimical to faith. The story of Joseph is used to bring out the conceptual framework of distinctively Jewish adult education. Passages from Leviticus about the casting out of lepers from the community are used against their manifest meaning, but in a more profound sense, to understand and guide the timeless and contemporary relationship of illness to covenant. Completely without contrivance Rosenak shows that seemingly archaic passages of Scripture have a practical bearing upon every everyday life, not just for Jews, not just once-upon-a-time, but today, for all of us.

What you’ll read in this book is what Catholic educators — parents especially — desire for their students and offspring. Rosenak asks how we move a child from

outside to inside the community; from information to involvement; to an experience in which the child is “taken seriously as a participant” (60). This is the great problem in modern Catholic education too. What makes this book worth reading is that it does not argue for solutions, as if educational problems are merely technical ‘glitches’ which need ‘putting right,’ but it gets us **asking the right questions** so that we can work out the solutions for ourselves in our particular set of circumstances.

The book is in four parts. Part 1 treats of the parent-child relationship within the family. Part 2 looks at the educational conjunction between home and school. Part 3 deals with the topic of how to preserve the integrity of a tradition in a world at odds with it. This is particularly relevant. Part 4 is about self-education in later life, dealing with touchy subjects like illness and dying. “Underlying the concept of self-education is the developing ability of individuals and communities to decide what and who they are” (23). A disturbing idea in itself in some Western Catholic contexts.

Rosenak leaves us with dilemmas, often sharp ones. These are dilemmas that are not insuperable but we, if we are responsible adults, are called to address them. In any case, they cannot be avoided. This book lays a big emphasis on responsibility throughout, and also on adulthood. The two go together, an irresponsible education and culture is one in which there is no proper or tangible concept of adulthood. What is the Catholic concept of adulthood? What are the models for it? Who are the models? It seemed to me that Christianity has something to learn from Judaism on these questions.

Religion for adults is about having the freedom and responsibility to make decisions for oneself. Rosenak gets down to this question in Part 1. What happens when we reach a fork in the road? Do we blindly and arbitrarily choose one way, or do we discover grounds for choosing the right way? “Rule-bound or normative persons fail to solve, or even to see, new problems and are thus kept from dealing reasonably and responsibly with them” (92). It is the adapting of tradition to new circumstances that continues to perpetuate norms in the first place. Rule following only perpetuates rules without responsibility among a spiritually enslaved people. The adaptation of tradition by the educated adult reveals the binding quality of God’s commandments by bringing them to life in the present.

While the sources of education in this book are traditional, the consequences of them are practical. Rosenak shows us the grounds for decision-making by looking at incidents recounted in Exodus. For the Israelites it was one fork in the road after another. They were never quite sure what to do. For instance, what did they do when, having escaped Egypt, they reached the Red Sea? Rosenak examines a Midrash in which a rabbi teaches that the people were divided into four different camps about what to do next. Rosenak’s conversation with this commentary presents an educational ideal and is exemplary. This ideal cannot be stated as a proposition, for then what would it be worth? The ideal is rather to understand **certain tensions** within and between time-honored educational models. The conversations which largely comprise the book are themselves models of the teaching-learning experience that they advocate in various ways.

The chapter on priestly garments (Chapter 7) was fascinating in this regard. The question of the relevance of the long passages in Exodus about the adornment of the High Priest is raised. These are the kinds of passages which make the Jewish Scripture read like ancient literature rather than living tradition, even to me. What are we to make of them educationally? With the ease of real living learning Rosenak shows how educationally it is a bad thing to debunk honor in the name of dignity and what happens if we do. “Whereas in a world of honor, the individual discovers his or her true identity in roles to be played, it is radically otherwise in the world of dignity” (129). Rosenak’s simple elaboration of this thesis, his advocacy of teaching honor with dignity, is wisdom largely disregarded today.

The chapters on culture and education impressed me by the fearless advocacy of particularity that I found there, which is pertinent to Catholics. In Part 4 there is an excellent discussion of the difference between knowledge-for-use and knowledge-for-understanding. Nowhere else have I seen this old nut cracked so simply, which it needs to be in a time when education has collapsed into training and ‘skills acquisition.’ Even-handed and wise are the two words that best describe this book.

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