

YANA

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A vehicle for ferrying news and view among members and contacts of the New Zealand Association for the Study of Religions

This issue has been produced by:

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CANTERBURY

Here at Canterbury we are delighted with our excellent ranking in the PBRF exercise that confirms Religious Studies at Canterbury as one of the top programmes in the Faculty of Arts and Social sciences. Hopefully we can build on this and convince the University that a new position is appropriate.

"Push": occasional papers in Theology and Religious Studies is still in existence but, due to financial constraints, is being scaled back to a twice-yearly journal. The first issue for 2004 is about to go to the printers and should be out in the next couple of weeks. I am always looking for new material- either from staff or from students- good essays etc that could be of interest to a wider audience. Please send material to:

Push

School of Philosophy & Religious Studies,
University of Canterbury

or contact Mike Grimshaw for more details.

Mike Grimshaw

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MASSEY

Student numbers for Religious Studies at Massey were quite satisfactory in 2002-2003, considering we have only two staff, Christopher van der Krog and Bronwyn Elsmore. The logic of my argument that with more staff we could put on more papers and attract even more students seems to escape those who make the decisions.

The staffing level has meant we have not encouraged too many graduate students over the past few years, though thesis supervision has continued. We are now looking to build up our graduate programme again.

Bronwyn Elsmore

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OTAGO

We are sorry to lose Malcolm McLean, who retired at the end of last year. Malcolm has a long association with the Department and we will be the poorer without his insights into the history of the Religious Studies programme. Students will also miss his teaching style, which has managed to combine high academic standards with an engaging liveliness of presentation. Malcolm will be replaced in July 2004 by Dr Will Sweetman, who currently teaches at the University of Newcastle and who is presently in Germany on a von Humboldt scholarship. Will has an interest in the construction of the category "religion" in

the eighteenth century as well as in the reception of the Indian religious traditions ("Hinduism") in the West. Also, we have just appointed Murray Rae to a position in Systematic Theology.

I'm just about to fly to Belgium to attend a conference on the historical Jesus quest, all expenses paid by the Theology Faculty of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. A lecturer there is using my last book as a textbook for a graduate course. The Philosophy Department have just asked me to teach their Philosophy of Religion paper as a summer school paper next year, and perhaps to contribute to teaching it again in the second semester.

Greg Dawes

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VICTORIA

We said good by to Toni Huber and Mona Schrempf last year. Toni left to take up a professorship at Humboldt University in Berlin, where he will head the Tibetan Studies programme (see interview below). We are sad to lose such excellent colleagues.

We have appointed Michael Raddich, a PhD candidate at Harvard and native New Zealander to fill Toni's vacancy. Michael will join us in June 2005. We have also appointed Islam specialist Arthur Buehler PhD. Harvard, as a senior lecturer. Art arrives in June 2004. Arriving in December 2004 is Chris Marshall, who has been appointed to the St. John's Lectureship in Christian Theology. We will have special reports on Michael, Art, and Chris in an upcoming edition of YANA.

Last year the department shifted from our house at 94 Fairlie Terrace to the Hunter building, which is more centrally located. Numbers remain strong.

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WAIKATO

Religious Studies at Waikato is now firmly - and happily - housed within the Department of Philosophy. Some academic synergies are emerging. A first year core Philosophy course (The Big Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy) was cross-listed for Religious Studies credit. One quarter of this paper was Philosophy of Religion, taught by Dr Pratt who also taught one half of the level three Philosophy of Religion paper. Enrolment numbers in the Religious Studies undergraduate papers remain firm, with some increases.

Norman Simms will be teaching a new course in the second trimester this year, "*Modern*

Jewish Writing."

Doug Pratt has been invited to Birmingham, UK, (Graduate Institute for Theology and Religion) to teach a module in their MA course (Christian-Muslim Relations) and to work with Dr David Thomas on developing an international research project in this area.

While there Doug will be giving a seminar in Stuttgart and presenting a paper to a Conference on Religious Pluralism at Uppsala University.

Doug Pratt & Norman Simms

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Book Notices

Voices of the Poor in Africa: Moral Economy and the Popular Imagination (Rochester Studies in African History and the Diaspora)

By [Elizabeth Isichei](#)

Hardcover: 270 pages Publisher: University of Rochester Press; (November 2002) ISBN: 1580461077

"This book boldly recreates the popular imagination of Atlantic West Africa. It also crosses the Atlantic to the New World of African-American and Caribbean slavery, and takes some comparative glances at East and Central Africa as well. Modernity, as Isichei concedes, has brought new opportunities, even new freedoms. But it has brought more false promises than settled improvements. She concludes, in line with the African novelist Chinua Achebe (in his novel *Anthills of the Savannah*) that the West needs to understand the political oppressions, moral dissolutions, and social differentiations of modernity just as vividly as the African poor see them, before we can begin to plumb the depths of most African's needs. This highly original work of historical sympathy administers that illuminating shock of truth, which must always be the first step in comprehension."

-- John Lansdale, Reader in African History, Cambridge University, England.

"With a marvellous combination of wide-ranging empirical research and eloquent writing, Elizabeth Isichei has produced a monumental new landmark in African studies -- the history of modern African moral economy."

-- Ralph A. Austen, Professor of African History, University of Chicago

"This book successfully makes audible and understandable unheard African men and women's voices from below, from the Atlantic slave trade to the colonial and post-colonial world. Its major success is to historically decipher this world of popular culture

and sensibility, past and present. These “illegitimate” because “subjugated” knowledges unceasingly were and still are a place of cultural innovation, embodied through a multitude of sources: tales, myths, songs, rumours. You must read this comprehensive book, mingling local and global glances, to understand African history on its own terms.”

-- Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, Professuere emeriti, Universite Paris

“Isichei has drawn on prodigious and varied readings to sketch savvy popular African scepticism about the meaning of their encounters with alien worlds of commerce, colonial rule, and the modern state. In the spirit of other recent studies of popular culture and politics, this book carries Africanists in all disciplines revealingly beyond their own alienness to so much of what we have tried to study in Africa from positions derived from those critiqued in the modes she evokes. The book is a stimulating, provocative read.”

-- Joseph C. Miller, T. Cary Johnson Jr., Professor of History, University of Virginia.

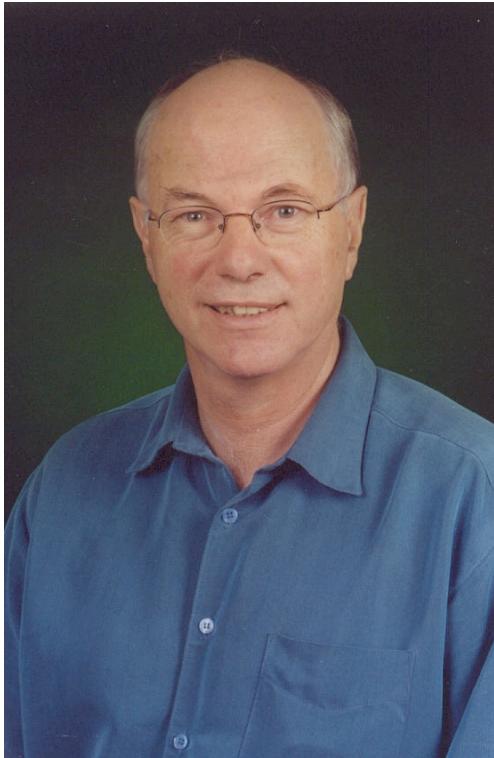
CHRISTINE NEWMAN (ED), THROUGH THE WHIRLWIND: PROCEEDINGS OF THE DISABILITY, SPIRITUALITY AND FAITH CONFERENCE, WELLINGTON, 1-4 MAY, 2003 NZ\$22 (\$30 overseas) Order from dfsnetwork@whirlwind.dns2go.com, or c/ 14 Farm Rd., Northland, Wellington

In May 2003, New Zealand's first conference on Disability, Spirituality and Faith was held in Wellington. Academics, activists, families, and people with disabilities heard papers on chaplaincy and pastoral care, theology and disability, theology of health and indigenous spirituality and disability. Keynote speakers were University of Tasmania medical ethicist Rev. Dr Chris Newell, Trinity Methodist Theological College pastoral theologian Rev. Dr Mary Caygill and Indigenous activist Huhana Hickey. Workshops investigated another twenty-two topics, many of them close to the bone ('Avoiding Mis-Directed Pastoral Missiles', for example).

The proceedings have just been published, with the texts of the keynote addresses and workshop summaries. Although the title and goals are deliberately interfaith, the outcome is predominantly Christian. In other respects, though, the proceedings cover a very wide ground. Voices of intellectual, physical and mental health disability ring through the various contributions; horror-stories of pastoral faux-pas leap out at the reader, but prove the counterpoint to inspiring accounts of growth and renewal and useful reflection on faith communities' practical programs. In keeping with the conference's broad approach, the proceedings will interest a wide readership--people reflecting on their own or family members' disability; religious communities working to become more inclusive; professionals wondering how to take account of spiritual dimensions in their clinical practice; academics in the area of pastoral theology and religion and health.

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Book by Douglas Pratt, Religious Studies, Dept of Philosophy.
Rethinking Religion: Exploratory Investigations. Adelaide:
ATF Press, 2003, pp. xii + 202.

“...what binds this varied programme together is the lucidity and cogency of Pratt’s arguments, his grasp of the philosophically possible and his readiness to scrutinise things as they are in that light ... the clarity with which he writes elucidates and makes more coherent many aspects of religious thought and life.”

-- Dr Ruth Page, former Principal of New College, University of Edinburgh

Also from Doug, see his chapter in a festschrift for Kenneth Cragg, 'Pluralism and Interreligious Engagement: The Contexts of Dialogue'. In David Thomas with Clare Amos, eds., **A Faithful Presence, essays for Kenneth Cragg**. London: Melisende Press, 2003, pp. 402-416.

Report on a New Paper

Religion and Magic: A Report on a New Paper

Greg Dawes
University of Otago



Last year I developed a new paper, on Religion and Magic, which I offered in the second semester 2003. As with any project undertaken in the modern university, the offering of this paper had a crassly instrumental as well as a more strictly academic goal. The crassly instrumental goal needs no elaboration. It attracted a lot of students. But the strictly academic purpose was, perhaps, not so immediately apparent. Since Jim Veitch has so eloquently argued that we should all be studying terrorism (NZASR conference December 2002), I thought it might be interesting to develop a parallel set of arguments, explaining why at least some of us ought to be studying magic.

As readers of *YANA* will be aware, the question of the relationship of religion and magic has been hotly debated for more than a century. But however we answer that question, there is no disputing either the historical or the contemporary significance of those practices that we customarily call magical. In discussions of both the scientific revolution and the early-modern witch-trials, for instance, the role of magic in European

history has become a major focus of scholarly interest. We now know that even the pioneers of modern science could regard 'natural magic' as a legitimate field of enquiry (Hansen 1986; Copenhagen 1990). No less a figure than Francis Bacon advocated its study. And while Isaac Newton was certainly a great early modern scientist, he was also (in the words of John Maynard Keynes) 'the last of the magicians', who 'regarded the universe as a cryptogram set by the Almighty'. We are no less appalled than were our predecessors by the witch-hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries, but we can now understand why witchcraft and demonology played so important a role in the thinking of that period (Clark 1997). Nor has the revival of magical practices in our own time escaped scholarly attention. It has been thoroughly documented, not only by practitioners of the craft (Adler 1979), but also by anthropologists (Luhrmann 1989). The results of all this research are helpfully summarized in a recently published six-volume series on *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe* (Ankarloo and Clark 1999–2002).

But where are the scholars of religion? Practically all this work has been done by historians or anthropologists, working outside the religious studies community. One can applaud their work, while also lamenting the lack of interest among scholars of religion. Even the most traditional of our colleagues, interested in the history of Christianity, could fruitfully approach that history from the point of view of occult religiosity. After all, in the lives of numerous Christians (and not a few of their pastors!) the two have been inseparable. No one who has read it can forget Benvenuto Cellini's colourful account of terrifying evenings spent in the Coliseum conjuring demons. But it is worth recalling that the 'necromancer' whose services he employed was a priest. Nor should scholars of religion overlook the role played by magic in the establishment of new religious movements (Wilson 1975), a topic that brings us back to the vexed issue of the relationship of magic and religion.

There are those who argue that the distinction between religion and magic is otiose. Its only possible function is evaluative. What is described as magic is merely a type of religion of which the speaker disapproves. Among contemporary anthropologists this view is common, but it is also found among scholars of religion, at least one of whom has called for the abandonment of 'magic' as a scholarly category (Smith 1995). While one needs to beware of merely evaluative uses of the term (Mauss 1972), this exclusivity does not seem warranted, at least when dealing with European religious history. In the religious history of Europe, magic is an indigenous term. There has been no shortage of figures who rejoiced in the title magician and did not regard it as a term of disparagement. Nor did they understand what they were doing as necessarily in opposition to religion, no matter what their enemies may have said.

How then may we distinguish religion and magic? Few today would defend the rigid distinctions set up by James Frazer, for whom magic is the manipulation of impersonal powers whose effects are automatic, while religion piously supplicates

personal gods whose behaviour is less predictable. Interestingly, recent research has shown that this distinction is much older than the work of Frazer, dating back not just to the Protestant Reformers (Thomas 1971), but to the ancient Greeks (Graf 1997). But it can be defended only on the gratuitous assumption that there existed some period of history in which magic was free of religious influence and at the cost of disregarding much of what even participants think of as magical (Mauss 1972). Far more fruitful is the line of enquiry established by Durkheim and his followers, according to which magic is distinguished from religion not so much by the character of its rites, as by the circumstances in which they occur. According to this view, magic represents a form of religiosity that is socially deviant, tending towards the illegitimate. It borrows its elements from religion — from the dominant religion of its own society or from some long-dead or foreign religious tradition — and deploys those elements in opposition to the religious establishment of its day. But its opposition to that establishment is complex and often dialectical (O'Keefe 1982). Magic can offer an alternative to established religiosity, one that satisfies the needs of small groups and individuals, or it can be used to argue with and to renew the religious establishment. Movements employing magic can even become new religions in their own right, against which new magical movements may in due course arise. Similarly, established religions may adopt apparently magical practices as a way of responding to the needs to which magic caters.

This more sophisticated view of the relationship of religion and magic allows one to avoid the fruitless alternatives that so often characterize such discussion. Was Jesus a magician (Smith 1978) or a messiah (Kee 1989)? Silly question, when in fact he could be both (Aune 1980). How could Joseph Smith Jr go from being a popular magician, employed to discover hidden treasure with the aid of his mysterious seer stone (Quinn 1998), to a figure recognized by ten million followers as a prophet sent by God? In the light of sociological theory of magic, this passage from magician to prophet seems not at all unexpected. Indeed the history of the Mormons offers a striking illustration of why students of religion cannot afford to ignore magic. Here is a major Christian religious movement that becomes fully comprehensible only when placed in the context of the occult traditions of nineteenth-century North America, traditions that themselves date back to the Renaissance (Brooke 1994).

Enough said! There is no doubting the contemporary significance of papers on terrorism. I wish all our students of terrorism well. God only knows we need them. But allow me to put in a word for the study of magic. It may be the poor neighbourhood of the religious world, but it is one in which not a few of our more respectable religions were born, loathe though they may be to admit the fact. Perhaps it's worth a visit!

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Reviews

Minding Buddhism

***Psychology and Buddhism: From Individual to Community* (2003)**

Kathleen H. Dockett, G. Rita Dudley-Grant and C. Peter Bankart (eds.)

From the *International and Cultural Psychology Series* (Anthony Marsella ed.). New York, Boston, Dordrecht, London, Moscow: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers.

Buddhism is a religion that emphasizes psychological aspects, and the construct of the mind, so to find psychologically based books that have introduced Buddhism into their studies is no surprise. Many of these contemporary books are in the realm of the “New Age” approach, but *Psychology and Buddhism* takes an academic and sympathetic tone, illustrating the compatibility between Buddhism and modern Western Psychology. It captures a cross-disciplinary approach derived from both psychologists and Buddhist scholars, threshing together a delightful mix of scholarly effort, and an optimistic outlook with regard to the potential for social improvement. This book blends empirical evidence within an original anti-reductive atmosphere, acknowledging the complexity of human religious life and the individual mind. *Psychology and Buddhism* is a collection of essays contributed over a period of several years. In collaboration with the editors, Kathleen H. Dockett, G. Rita Dudley-Grant and C. Peter Bankart, *Psychology and Buddhism* addresses critical global issues such as environmentalism, societal integration and transformation, and mental health.

The Introduction includes a social commentary on terrorism and the events of “September 11,” one assumes as a pragmatic support for one of the central theses of the publication: that violence – to the self or other – is not an appropriate response if world peace or mental well-being is desired. The treatise on terrorism is the wellspring of one of my primary criticisms of the book: apparent confusion with regard to its central thesis, which does not explicitly address this issue. The aim of this publication is to explore the interface, and further the dialogue between psychology and Buddhism, leading to the enrichment of society and the creation of peaceful and sustainable communities. At first glance, terrorism, as one of society’s most currently pertinent social ills, appears concomitant with this goal. Unfortunately, the issue is left as it stands in the introduction, and not followed through in any of the proceeding essays, leaving the reader unfulfilled.

Psychology and Buddhism begins with a discussion regarding the theories of both psychology and Buddhism mutually advocating a “rigorous humanistic epistemology rooted in the ideal of empowerment through the exercise of reason, intentional action, and learning about the human condition through a scrupulous empiricism.” (1). It proceeds to expand on shared philosophical concerns, pertaining to both individual and community levels. We are tempted through an intriguing invitation to consider the possibility of Buddhism as a supporting process to such practices as Gestalt Psychology, addiction

theory, dasien analysis and community health by way of a practical personal responsibility and acceptance of diversity. Suddenly the tone shifts and at the closing stages, where one would expect to find future directions associated with the preceding dialogue, it is instead replaced by a discussion of politics and world peace. While the slow shift in focus from individuality to community can be seen, the link with terrorism, particularly September 11, and conjecture regarding the potential for world peace, appears to be an afterthought.

Psychology and Buddhism is divided into four sections, the first, “Foundations”; the second, “Healing and Psychotherapy: Alternatives in Psychotherapy”; the third, “Empowerment, Responsibility, and the Challenges of Change”; fourth and finally, “Future Directions: Global Impact”. This review will adhere to a similar arrangement, looking at each section in its entirety initially, and then discuss in brief each contributing essay.

Psychology and Religion in its first section traces the history of Buddhism, particularly in the aspects of its relationship both previously and potentially, with traditional Western psychological practice.

Part I starts with an essay by the editors, “On the Path of the Buddha: A Psychologists Guide to the History of Buddhism.” Reading theologically, it is asserted,

“[d]ay after day we encounter clients who work single mindedly and furiously against their own best interests. They seek to impose their will upon the world in order to secure love, respect, or devotion. Yet the harder they rail against reality, the more isolated, alienated, and alone they become. We want to say to them: Be still!” (17).

On the Path of the Buddha briefly traces the core teachings of Buddhism and restyles them to a Western form. This is a contour that emphasizes increased self-control, thereby shaping an innovative, more positive view and approach to existence. This is termed by the authors to be a “drastic change” in consciousness. On the Path of the Buddha lays out the fundamental doctrinal approaches of the three main schools of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana, and touches on the distinctions between them. On the Path of the Buddha also traces Buddhism’s arrival in the West, which leads fluidly on to Chapter Two, psychology professor C. Peter Bankart’s “Five Manifestations of the Buddha in the West: A Brief History.”

This article places mental health into the “bigger picture” of social and political engagement. Throughout the book it is shown that social and political concerns have persistently survived as an intrinsic part of Buddhism’s focus, particularly in the later schools. Bankart, Dockett and Dudley-Grant quote Daiseku Ikeda from the Soka Gakkai school, who says,

“dissatisfaction with the apolitical attitude of the early Hinayanists was among the factors leading to the rise of the Mahayana school, the problem of the proper relationship between politics and religion is a highly complex one and cannot be settled in haste.” (29)

Bankart samples attempts made by Eastern psychiatrists from as early as the 1950s, which, he says, sought to “form a sort of intellectual alliance with their Western colleagues” (47).

He asserts that this has not been a reciprocal practice (with the noted exception of Carl Jung) citing *Orientalism*, or the authoritarian domination and restructuring of Eastern approaches present in the West as the reason for this particularist and frequently harmful approximation.

Bankart traces the flow of Eastern contributions to Western psychology through time, including notable Western scholars of psychology in his account and remarking upon the effects of Zen Buddhism, Tibetan psychiatry, and the encouragement of an increased holistic view of the self. He concludes by stating,

“I want to end by coming full-circle back to the spectre of orientalism that has overshadowed most of the contents of this essay...”Buddhism without the Buddha” may become the ultimate expression of transcendental American optimism.” (66).

Edward S. Ragsdale’s “Value and Meaning in Gestalt psychology and Mahayana Buddhism” concludes the first section of *Psychology and Buddhism*. It focuses on relational meaning, as proposed by both Buddhism and Gestalt theory. Kohler’s famous statement, that the whole is more than the sum of its parts is reflected in Gestalt therapy’s relational viewpoint. Ragsdale points out that each part of a person should not be analysed as independent, as they are shaped by their function in relation to the whole.

Ragsdale’s next section, simply titled “Mahayana Buddhism” focuses on misperception as it appears in two forms: absolutism and nihilism. Absolutism involves “clinging” to things and beings as if they were “really real,” and in possession of an independent existence. The polar opposite of this, nihilism, involves clinging to non-being. To be present at either of these points, Ragsdale asserts, means rejecting the contingent truth that is present with regard to all things in existence. Ragsdale thoroughly investigates both of these positions, arriving ultimately at the theory of dependent arising. The theory of dependent arising refutes both schemas of absolutism and nihilism by pointing out that the fact that they are dependent denies any inherence, and the fact they arise disallows non-existence. These philosophical assertions are then linked to a moral and social view: “The transformation of consciousness that joins compassion with insight into emptiness entails profound change in moral understanding.” (83). This, Ragsdale says, then involves altering one’s actions to suit the new morality, which is now informed by buddhistic compassion.

In the third section Ragsdale parallels Gestalt therapy with the tenets of Buddhism he has reviewed and concludes:

“Psychological growth is facilitated by relational understanding, which promotes respect for others and greater thoughtfulness in addressing value diversity. Where value differences are considered in relation to underlying meanings and contexts, a commensurability of values is suggested... This invariant relation of meaning and value provides a basis for ethical validity across its full range of expression (for ignorance is never ever complete).” (98).

Part II of *Psychology and Buddhism* – “Healing and Psychotherapy: Alternatives in Psychotherapy” focuses on a more holistic view that is located in psychological practice, from the standpoint of encouraging buddhistic self-responsibility and the application of a Buddhist epistemology.

Clinical psychologist G. Rita Dudley-Grant supplies Chapter Four, “Buddhism, Psychology, and Addiction Theory in Psychotherapy”. She confirms,

“[t]here has been an explosion of interest in Buddhist philosophy, psychology and practices among psychologists within the past few years. Interest in Eastern religions is not new, however, Buddhist practices have been particularly well received within the more popular psychology or “self-help” community.”(105).

This chapter briefs the reader in classical psychoanalytic thought and concepts of the self in both Buddhist and psychoanalytic thinking, before turning to Behavioural Theory and the practice of self-control. Both areas are looked at from the point of view of Western psychological advances and Buddhism, but in my view, altogether too briefly, not providing a sufficient foundation upon which Dudley-Grant furthers her arguments. This, essentially, is the chapter’s climate; the reader feels they are being shipped from one area to another before a full grasp is had on the previous section.

Dudley-Grant writes:

“Psychology, Buddhism and addiction are considered from two perspectives in this chapter: One is a theoretical understanding of the psychology of addiction from a Buddhist perspective. The other more subtle issue is the role of spirituality in recovery, and how the practice of Buddhism is presented in the context of the discussion of the role of spirituality in recovery.” (112).

This approach seems out of place in an academic work, as spirituality is a rather different issue to the pragmatic practice of religion. Dudley-Grant refers to this later, referring to a “concerted attempt” by other authors to separate religion and spirituality, but denied it on the grounds of “belief in an external being or process...following a Judaeo-Christian theology.” Again the reader can only speculate on where this originated and its relevance to this discussion at hand.

This chapter presents a theological tone, and a rather confused focus in parts. It offers Buddhism as an alternative method of addiction recovery in contrast to traditional methods,

“[t]he Buddhist who suffers from addiction must also acknowledge that the disease has overcome their clarity, self-discipline and wisdom. Buddhist practices can then be used to promote recovery in the same way that a Judaeo/Christian addict would seek “...through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact *with God as we understand him.*” (AA, 1976, p.59)” (113).

While this may be a useful tool, this theological stance is somewhat incongruent with the rest of the book, which promotes Buddhist standards that are more geared towards the engagement on non-Buddhists.

Polly Young-Eisendrath targets evolutionary psychology in Chapter Five, “Suffering from Biobabble: Searching for a Science of Subjectivity.” “Biobabble”, according to Young-Eisendrath, is

“knee-jerk biological determinism” that is the “widespread tendency to use terms (e.g. adaptation) that come from various aspects of the biological sciences to attempt to explain human actions and moods without even a reasonable understanding of the term, the science, the associated theory (or lack of it), and/or the target of explanation.” (125).

This, she further qualifies, when placed in the context of suffering (*dukkha*) refers to a state of being off-centre or out-of-balance. She looks at some of the implications of “biobabble” in relation to explanations of human actions. Among them is a shift away from personal responsibility as

“the “master molecule” of the gene, falsely endowed with an autonomous power, overrides the effects of personal desires, intentions and actions. The term “gene” or “adaptation” has in fact replaced intention, purpose, and morality in most popular psychological and psychiatric accounts of the ways in which people thrive or fail in their everyday lives.” (127).

This is not the way to a comfortable life, says Young-Eisendrath, nor is it accurate. She points out that even after the appropriate medications have been taken, and psychotherapy sought, those who believe in a genetic (pre)disposition still suffer. Instead, she promotes, one must turn to Buddhism to understand the nature of suffering, particularly the Buddhist psychology as found in the *Abhidharma*, which has specific empirical investigations into the nature of suffering.

Young-Eisendrath discusses “intention” and “subjectivity” referring to “science” as a systematized knowledge that assumes human behaviour is intelligible. In order for this to be true, she argues, we will need to expand present understandings of the human psyche. To restrict knowledge of “human motivations, conflicts and desires” to biochemical or organic processes, restricts the social awareness of human complexity and determinants. By way of a discussion of the philosophy of science, particularly Thomas Kuhn’s paradigms, which present the theory of exemplary models being offered as if they were reality, Young-Eisendrath shows biological determinism to be “one such example of bad science” (135). She concludes:

“Americans seem baffled by the senseless acts of violence – homicides and suicides among them – carried out even by privileged young people living in our society...[w]hen human traits, from the sublime to the undesirable are explained in terms of adaptation and genes, how can anyone who has developed during these times take seriously a belief in personal responsibility for oneself, let alone for one’s community and society?” (137).

“Role and Responsibility in Dasienanalysis and Buddhism” by Belinda Siew Luan Khong highlights the parallels between the two systems of thought, which may at first, she notes, seems disparate: as a religion promulgated by the Buddha in the sixth century and a twentieth century form of psychotherapy.

Grounded in the work of philosopher Martin Heidegger, dasienanalysis was developed by Swiss psychoanalyst Medard Boss and “encourages therapists to understand phenomena as they are immediately perceived and experienced by clients rather than through theoretical explanations and hypotheses.” (139). Khong point out Boss’ interest in Buddhism and the role of responsibility of an individual in terms of a being both a pre-requisite for, and maintenance tool for mental health in both dasienanalysis and Buddhism. A philosophical discussion of Heidegger and “Being” as *in* and *with* the world follows. “Being”,

according to Heidegger and Khong, is the ontological foundation of everything, but the ontic manifestations differ. (143). Therefore, by taking responsibility for seeing things as they are,

“[t]his insight can assist people in comprehending what is changeable (the ontic situation) and what is not (the ontological situation).” (144).

Buddhism is relevant here in its philosophical estimation of dependent origination, that everything arises in relation to another factor, but is presented here in the light of a *personal responsibility* to realise the limits of ability. There are primarily to change perception, rather than focus on the ability to change events.

“According to the Buddha by encouraging the person to see things as they are, and to respond appropriately...[as] responsibility involves *respondability*.” (148).

Khong points out that social responsibility is a continuum of personal responsibility, that “this sense of responsibility for oneself is extended *reflexively* to all beings to whom we are inextricably connected, socially and ecologically.” (152). Khong concludes that “there is a genuine basis for an authentic, healthy engagement through an enlarged notion of responsibility, since each perspective is made more meaningful by an understanding of each other.” (157).

Richard P. Hayes’ “Classical Model of a Healthy Mind” concludes the second part of *Psychology and Buddhism*. One of the shorter essays, it explores classical Buddhist concepts and mentalities from the Buddhist tradition that assist with the elimination of frustration. He says

“[c]hanging one’s mentality, as everyone knows who had tried to do it, is not an easy task. It requires more than simply deciding to improve. Because the task is complex, Buddhists devised a number of programs to help people improve their outlooks and cultivate more realistic expectation.” (162).

Hayes then breaks these tasks up into the tripartite structure of ethics, contemplation and wisdom, in line with the three traditional phases of the Buddhist path. Hayes places good habits (*sala*) or good character under the heading of ethical tasks, meditation as contemplations, and study, reflection and cultivation as the development of wisdom. He develops these ideas briefly, specifying his exact meaning and practices to be followed, then summarizes the classical Buddhist exemplary story of “The Lion’s Roar on the Turning of the Wheel” to explicate his meanings. This tale relates how to run a kingdom, within the context of inevitable change, and the social changing power of self-responsibility. Hayes shows how a healthy mind leads to a healthy society, and concludes with a summing up of the middle Path of Buddhism, stating that the Buddha’s “method of achieving an end to frustration was one that avoided extreme self-denial and extreme self-indulgence.” (169). This should, asserts Hayes, be applied to all areas of the personal and socially engaged life to maintain mental equanimity.

Part III of *Psychology and Buddhism* is titled “Empowerment, Responsibility and the Challenges of Change” and focuses on social transformation, through the application of Buddhist principles and ethics to societal interaction. The theme of an empirically based

ethic of care is carried through such issues as individual and community empowerment and engagement, ecological sustainability, ethnopolitical conflict and human rights. This section reads well and provides a fitting follow-on from the previous works in the compendium, branching out naturally from the view of the self to discuss the effect of that self on society and promoting the idea that a re-informed self can affect positive change in society as it presently exists.

Kathleen H. Dockett contributes again, in Chapter Eight: “Buddhist Empowerment: Individual, Organisational, and Societal Transformation.” Reading more as a social policy essay, Dockett thoroughly tackles the central role of religion in empowerment studies, and litters the essay with references for the interested reader. In defining the concept of empowerment as “a process that enables people, organisations, and communities to gain control over issues of concern to them,” Dockett divides empowerment into four categories for discussion: individual, organisational, community and societal. She addresses each of these concepts within a broad psychological/buddhistic framework in terms of “fostering healthy individuals and healthy communities”. Commitments, according to Dockett, provide a sense of purpose and meaning to one’s activities, and when combined with self-control and a “challenge orientation”, that is one which welcomes change; self-responsibility and “a sense of self-efficacy, competence, and personal control” results (185). Dockett points out the originality of this approach in her conclusion where she states, “[c]ommunity psychologists studying Buddhism are like “new kids on the block” in a very old “neighborhood” ”: (193) both, she suggests, can benefit from an integration of transformative resources and differing methodologies.

Chapter Nine, “The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Community Building” is a collaborative effort from Leonard A. Jason and John Moritsugu.

This reads very similarly to Dockett’s previous work and seems redundant, with the exception of its comments on ecology. Essentially this piece constitutes a pragmatic account of the initiatives set out by Dockett in the previous chapter.

In Chapter Ten, Dockett collaborates with Doris North-Schulte to provide “Transcending Self and Other: Mahayana Principles of Integration.” This chapter introduces ethnopolitical conflict in a globalised society, and induces both interest and emotion through a poignant presentation of facts and statistics alongside an analysis of how a Mahayana perspective can transcend difference, through management and prevention. Following a statistically based discussion and etiology of global conflict and genocidal activities, the authors introduce the Buddhist worldview, including quotes from Daisaku Ikeda, the Lotus Sutra and Chinese Buddhist T’ien t’ai. They write,

“[t]he very process of enculturation and social identity formation is a breeding ground for disharmony between ethnic groups because it encourages an attachment to difference.” (220).

Overcoming these attachments they say, is “essential to peace” and they set out the “unifying set of values and principles” from Buddhism that can lead the way. Scholastic opposition to the view of Mahayana principles being key to global peace leads Dockett and North-Schulte to conclude:

“...we as human beings can create and sustain peaceful societies...[o]ur difference is a natural part of our existence and is needed to help us create meaning and value in our lives as well as to live up to our potential as compassionate human beings.” (235).

Environmental scholar Shuichi Yamamoto provides Chapter Eleven, “Environmental Problems and Buddhist Ethics: From the Perspective of the Consciousness-Only Doctrine.” This chapter proposes Buddhist views of the environment and nature, and the contribution of the Consciousness-Only doctrine to successful management and sustainability of the environment and environmental resources. Yamamoto writes that perceptions of nature are based on perceptions of truth, and sets out Buddhist truths in relation to the doctrine of dependent origination, concluding that “the very principles of bio-diversity and symbiosis of nature and living things are primary in maintaining our world.” (241). Following a discussion regarding non-duality of existence and the five defilements (as in accordance with the five aggregates of material body, perceptions, feelings, karmic predispositions and consciousness), Yamamoto points out the critical nature of environmental awareness: what affects one being (sentient or non-sentient) affects another, with the effect eventually returning cyclically to the initiator. Yamamoto examines how the products of science and technology have impacted destructively upon the world; this has produced these technologies and is not compatible with Buddhism, which asserts the imperfection and inadequacy of human thought.

David W. Chappell provides Chapter Twelve “Buddhist Social Principles” which concludes **Part III** of *Psychology and Buddhism*. Chappell points out that while the Buddha has been termed “the world’s first psychotherapist” he was socially active, spending most of his philosophical career travelling and engaging with others. Chappell discusses the Buddha’s methodology and teachings, as they were applied socially, and asserts the Buddha’s insistence that morality was a “more important social criteria than birth or power or knowledge” (261) and that it applied universally. To this he adds,

“[d]ialogue takes Buddhist mindfulness practices into the social sphere. It is a way to become aware of the different social factors involved in our shared world to develop a more inclusive understanding and to create new choices for action.” (264).

Thus Chappell promotes interreligious, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary dialogue as a means to develop a healthier worldview. On the topic of human rights, however, Chappell asserts that dialogue is not enough, as it requires “mutual respect, equality, and willing partners” (268) which is not always the case, and even “Buddhist morality is not enough...offer[ing] only general encouragement for universal compassion.” (268). So what is enough? Chappell points out that in terms of education, health and employment, Buddhism’s approach has been weak, but with increased attention to this area, Buddhism can provide much for the improvement of dialogue and social wellness. He suggests a policy for human rights that encompasses the practice of non-harm towards both the self and others, the cultivation of inner peace and outer compassion, and protection for the identity of others, as crucial elements to the achievement of global peace.

Part IV, “Future Directions: Global Impact” is constituted of just one essay, authored by the editors. Within it they assert their personal commitment to peace and the alleviation of suffering and recognize Buddhism as a vehicle for that commitment.

Summing up the book, the final chapter offers recommendations as set out by *International and Cultural Series* editor, Anthony Marsella, who charges “psychology with expanding its horizons to meet the emerging political, environmental, social, and cultural challenges of the twenty-first century.” (284). The authors believe that this involves an increase in dialogue, appreciation of diversity and an enhanced understanding of the human psyche. They conclude by expressing a sincere hope that all individuals will take full responsibility for the creation of lasting global peace.

Overall, this book which is aimed at the academic community, succeeds in appealing to its target audience, albeit with the occasional minor failure to maintain objectivity. This blemish was most clearly illustrated in Polly Young-Eisendrath’s chapter on evolutionary psychology, which came across as typically reactionary, the very trait she criticizes. The chapters authored by editor G. Rita Dudley-Grant take a theological tone, but an exact doctrinal stance is never explicitly divulged. While this is not necessarily problematic, it was noticeable and appeared out of context given the academic audience the publication is intended for. That said, Dudley-Grant’s chapters were both optimistic and well informed, with a firm grounding in psychological theory. The voice of authority fluctuates from one essay to another. A sense of conviction was projected clearly in the works of Ragsdale, Dockett, Bankart and others, but this confidence was somewhat less perceptible in some of the other offerings, such as in the chapters contributed by Jason and Moritsugu, and Yamamoto.

Despite this, *Psychology and Buddhism* maintains a consistently high quality of scholarship and clarity. This book is strongly recommended for both the student of Buddhism or psychology, in addition to academics and practitioners already working in these disciplines. In terms of addressing a new field of scholarly interest, this a major publication which will also prove of interest to any person or group interested in a fresh approach to community building and social cohesion.

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Spotting God in the Brain

Andrew Newberg, Eugene D'Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2002. v + 234 pp. ISBN 034544034X (cloth); \$21.00.

“As the river flowing east and west
 Merge in the sea and become one with it,
 Forgetting that they were ever separate rivers,
 So do all creatures lose their separateness
 When they merge at last into”.
 (Newberg et. al. pp. 6-7)

This evocative quotation echoes the transcendent reality concept in all religions, in the search of which *Why God Won't Go Away* embarks. The hypothesis that Newberg and D'Aquili develop and defend can be summarised as follows: the human brain possesses a neurological mechanism for self-transcendence. When taken to extreme, this mechanism is able to erase the mind's sense of self and any conscious awareness of an external world (p. 146). In a scientific sense, all spiritual transcendence – from the mildest sense of religious uplift, to the profound states of mystic union - can be reduced to a neurochemical commotion of the brain, with the varying degree of intensity on the ‘unitary continuum’. This is supported by SPECT scan studies (p. 146). In the nine chapters that follow Newberg develops and analyses their findings, trespassing evolutionary theory, cognitive science, religious studies and philosophy, fusing these into what he calls ‘neurotheology’. While their neurological model offers a plausible explanation of the mystical states, Newberg admits that it can prove nothing about the ultimate nature of God (p. 151). The book is very much in the vein of William James' classic *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in the way that it puts empirical evidence of the *experiences* of religion as the essential reason God lives on.

The book begins with an alluring image of a devout Buddhist practitioner of Tibetan meditation, about to embark on a meditative voyage inward. Robert lights candles, incense, and prepares to lose himself in the deeper reality within. As he reaches the meditative peak, radioactive material is injected intravenously, followed by a trek to a metal table where the SPECT (Single Photon Emission Computer Tomography) camera's large crystal heads, orbiting his scull, scan inside his brain in order to detect the aforementioned radioactive tracer (p. 3). The procedures described in the introductory chapter bear the groundwork of the direct scientific research the book is based on. Newberg believes that the SPECT technology has allowed them to see the evidence of a neurological process that has evolved to allow humans to transcend material existence and connect with a deeper, more spiritual part of themselves – what some perceive as an absolute, universal reality (p. 9). The question that first comes to mind: How would the brain, on average “roughly the size of a large head of cauliflower, and resembles, in colour and consistency, a generous blob of extra-firm tofu”, accommodate this transcendent reality? (p. 17).

Chapter two presents a synopsis of the basic mechanisms of the human brain that allow us to experience reality as a cohesive whole - a platform from which to draw interpretations of the phenomena of religion. Despite two decades of rapid scientific advancement in the field of artificial intelligence, even the most brilliant robot is easily outperformed by a toddler, a cat, or even a hamster (p. 14). Newberg credits the evolutionary theory of mind, which renders the assembly of the internal neuron networks over millions of years of trial and error, shaped by specific problems of *survival* (p. 15). The survival of an organism, i.e. the objective of any living brain, is thus a strategy genetically fine-tuned, and depends on its aptitude of unraveling the complexities of its environment in a way as to produce the best chance of finding mates and food, while keeping low probability of falling over a cliff.

But matters get more perplexed. If reality is a mere rendition of the world created by the brain, is God a figment of our minds, or did God program our brains to recognise God? If He does exist, if Franciscan nuns do, indeed, hear the voice that belongs to Him, there is no other way for God to get into their minds except through the brain's neural pathways, as both spiritual and material experiences are made real to us through the same processing powers of the brain and the cognitive function of the mind (p. 57). Newberg traces neurological roots of human capabilities of spiritual experience in the basic structures and functions of the brain, the core ones being the autonomic nervous system, the limbic system, and the brain's intricate analytic function (p. 37). Drawing on complex interrelations of the arousal, the quiescent, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic systems (the latter are the two branches of the body's autonomic system), the chapter advances on to explain ways in which these (the autonomic nervous system in particular) are fundamental to religious experience, laying emphasis on their share in situations involving an element of survival interest (p. 39).

As explanations progress into specifics of religious practice, the scholarship of Joseph Campbell – an American writer on mythology and comparative religion is chosen to shed light on the purpose of myth-making. Braiding the twine of neurology, evolutionary theory and religious studies, Newberg states that all religion is founded upon myths (p. 56). Myths, he writes, are created by the fundamental neurological processes through which a brain makes sense of the world and which gives myths their staying power. The urge in every culture to make myths that have a generic basic structure has a biological origin - to relieve the anxiety of existential concerns and inadvertently increase chances of survival (pp. 63 & 70). The involuntary biological drive to make sense of things through the cognitive analysis of reality, dubbed the 'cognitive imperative', compels the mind to find resolutions to perpetually frustrating questions. 'Why were we born only eventually to die?' 'What happens to us when we die?' 'How was the universe made?' - myth always begins with the apprehension of a metaphysical problem that is eventually resolved through the use of metaphysical images and themes. The design of the cognitive drive is to increase organism's chances of survival and certain beliefs achieve that more effectively than do others (p. 70).

Ritual is the physical manifestation of the meaning in religion. It turns myths, spiritual *stories*, into spiritual *experience*, giving them substance (p. 91). Although rituals do provide a socially integrational function, Newberg believes that humans are driven to act out their myths by the biological operations of the brain (p. 92). Research reveals that repetitive rhythmic stimulation experienced in any kind of ritualised behaviour - be it dancing, chanting, prayer or even listening to a pack of wolves howling an eerie serenade have a potential to incite the limbic and autonomic systems. This thereby alters the fundamental ways the brain feels and interprets reality, dramatically affecting our neurological ability to define the limits of self (p. 79). A process termed 'deafferentation' disengages our sense of self by depriving the mind of its habitual awareness of the self and freeing it from the perception of the spatial world in which that self could be (p. 151). *A posteriori*, all rituals endeavor to lift participants out of their isolated sensibilities, immersing them into harmonic oneness, with the likelihood of social benefits - casing-off personal interests in favour of dedication to the common good (p. 80). In a religious context, the *ultimate* aim is the spiritual unification of a worshiper with God. Hence the whirling of Dervishes, prostration of Muslims, and the dancing around the fire in animal skins of medieval hunters (p. 92). Accompanied by fasting, hyperventilation or inhalation of incense, the multisensory repetitive stimulation leads to altered mental perception, hence 'spiritual transcendence' or 'deaffeentation' (pp. 86&88).

Our bodies, however, lack the stamina for sufficient ritual intensity and duration to muster the *utmost* unitary state (p. 116). Our mind can activate the same neurological mechanisms to a higher intensity. Rational sensibilities have tended to discard mysticism as cases of mental pathology of a dim, distant past. Yet, research shows that even mild spiritual experiences are associated with above-average levels of psychological health - better relationships, higher self-esteem, lower levels of anxiety (p. 108). The self-denying medieval Christian saints, the ritual sexuality of tantric Buddhists, the absorbing prayer rites – different times and traditions used a cornucopia of techniques to attain the exalted union. The mystical states they describe, nonetheless, sound identical. Void Consciousness, Nirvana, Brahman-atman or Union Mystica communicate the union with the absolute and the dissolution of self in it; at once a vivid consciousness of *no-thing* and a vivid consciousness of *everything* as an undifferentiated whole. Neurological explanation lies in the left and right orientation areas. The total shutdown of neural input causes the right orientation area (which produces our sense of space) to generate a sense of spacelessness, while the left orientation area (which generates our sense of self) induces a limitless perception of the self (p. 119). Similarly, while during an 'active' meditation a person concentrates upon a thought or an object and all irrelevant neural input is gradually stripped away, the idea enlarges until the mind perceives it as the whole depth and breath of reality (p. 122).

In the three concluding chapters, judgements regarding the origins, the nature and the importance of religion are drawn. The neurological approach points to the very origins of religion – God was *experienced* in mystical spirituality and was not a product of cognitive deduction. Religion persists because the wiring in our brains continues to be a source of unitary experiences, which are frequently interpreted as assurances of God's actuality (pp. 129&133). Yet it is unlikely that the neurology of transcendence evolved specifically for

spiritual reasons. In fact, Newberg proposes that it borrows the neural circuitry of sexual response - its purely *accidental* origin (p. 125). However, it is likely that the natural selection had favoured and, with time, enhanced the capabilities of a religious brain because religious behaviours and beliefs have turned out to be pragmatically good for us (p. 129). Medical inquiries point to impressive health benefits of religion – mainstream practitioners seem to have fewer strokes, and lower drug abuse, suicide and divorce rates (pp. 129&130). These benefits may be due to the healthy behaviours fostered by religious social support networks, and the effects religious activities like prayer exert upon the body's quiescent and arousal systems (p. 131). Faith in a higher power offers the assurance that life has meaning and purpose, which people are not alone in the struggle for survival, inducing us with the *will* to endure.

Is God just an idea no more real than a dream or do neurological roots of mysticism render it par to any other of the brain's perceptions? The question comes down to what we define as reality, which is still a matter of philosophical speculation. The realness of the material world is lucid compared to dreams or hallucinations. However, those who have experienced the mystical unity insist that when contrasted with the baseline reality, it is more convincingly vivid and genuine (pp. 152-153). This view of the experience as authentic and *positive* is what distinguishes mysticism from the delusions of schizophrenics. Science assumes an objective reality: "All that is real can be verified by scientific measurement, therefore, what can't be verified by science isn't really real" (p. 171). The fact that mystical experiences can only be proved directly through neurological function does not reduce its substance however. *All* perceptions exist in the mind, *all* of the objective reality is known to us through secondhand blips and flashes racing along the neural pathways (p. 146). Yet the two possibilities remain unresolved: either spiritual experience is a neurologically-created and contained construct, or the state of absolute union does in fact exist and can be described by the mind.

Newberg asserts that all faiths point to the essence of God as rationally inexplicable (p. 158). Clinging to the comforting images of a personal, knowable divinity diminishes God's ultimate reality. The personified conceptions are mere glimmers of both the personal and *transpersonal* spiritual reality they try to convey. What is more, the presumption of 'exclusive' truth upon which religious intolerance is based, may rise out of similar, yet incomplete states of neurobiological transcendence. If a mystic is to fall short of an absolute unity, the subjective awareness of the world will remain, effecting a sensation of visceral presence before a deity – the Jesus, the al-Lah. If science has killed the personal God of the Bible, nothing can be found in science or reason to refute the concept of a higher mystical reality (p. 169). What gives the metaphor of a knowable God its enduring meaning is its grounding in the experience of unconditional reality (p. 171). In his conclusions, Newberg calls on Tesdale's 'interspirituality' concept - spirituality as the actual religion of humankind, the source of all faiths. The neurology of transcendence provides a biological framework within which all religions can be reconciled. At the same time it settles the rift between science and religion, by showing pathways to the ultimate truth (pp. 168-169). As long as our brains are arranged the way they are, God, however we choose to define it, will not go away.

In sum, *Why God Won't Go Away* presents a well-developed (although an incomplete and a highly speculative) model of the persistence and possible origins of religion based on brain imaging studies. The authors have an apprehensive grasp of scientific as well as religious and philosophical material - from Joseph Campbell to Upanishads to SPECT scans of Tibetan Buddhists and Franciscan nuns. With the help of a little stretch of imagination, Newberg draws a series of feasible scenarios of the origins and purposes that religion might have served for our ancestors. I found some of the conjectural explanations a little far-fetched, however. Some of the mystical experiences that Newberg describes at length present an experience of nothingness. To suggest that all religions, even the most personal ones, arose out of the experience of impersonal nothingness is a tad forced. An obvious issue that baffled me as I was reading the book was that religious rituals more often than not are based on a non-rhythmic structure, which hence is even less likely to produce any 'unitary' states than rhythmic ritual behaviour like chanting or dancing, following Newberg's argument. I also did not find his theories on the origins of religiosity as such (that being in the mystical experience) transferable into the context of religious *existence*. Newberg inductively dismisses the God of the majority of practitioners of religion - God of moral codes, judgement, belief-induced rituals and prohibitions, an object of veneration. God that people actually interact with. The gap between theological understanding of God and the mundane business of religious agents placed in practical contexts is left to delusions and superstitions of the culture, rather than giving weight to the sociological existence of religion. This book lets inconsistencies in religious behaviour go unexplained, letting them slip through as an evolutionary and circumstantial casualty.

So ultimately, the descriptive reductionism of Newberg and D'Aquili's theory is too limited to be taken as a comprehensive theory of religion. Having said that, the new epilogue that concludes the 2002 edition of *Why God Won't Go Away* points to paths in the study of religious phenomena that neurotheology, or at least this particular book, has yet to explore. Newberg states that the book is not meant to imply that all religious beliefs or behaviours are inherently mystical (p. 174). Neurotheology must become 'megatheology' and 'metatheology' in order to describe fully how specific theological principles have arisen and explain the universal elements that religions seem to share.

All in all, I found this book unconvincing in its incompleteness, yet at the same time highly intriguing in the possibilities that it unravels.

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An Interview with Toni Huber

Toni Huber (centre, white man with dark brown hat) in the Field in East Tibet.



Toni Huber, formerly of Victoria University's Religious Studies programme, a native New Zealander (born in Christchurch) and one the world's foremost experts on Tibetan Culture recently accepted a professorship at the Humboldt University in Berlin. YANA caught up with Toni for an interview just before he and his wife Mona Schrempf and their daughter Nima left the country in April 2002.

YANA: *Tell us about your new position in Berlin.*

Toni: My new position is as the Professor of Tibetan Studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin. It is an "area studies" type chair, so I have potentially a huge field to consider: basically any humanities and social science approaches to ethnic Tibetan or highly Tibetan influenced societies from northern Pakistan over to western China and from the southern Himalaya north to Central Asia, plus of course the Tibetan Diaspora community worldwide. I have 5 staff, including 2 full-time lecturers, two research assistants and a secretary, plus the institute has its own specialist library run by librarians. In addition, I will be able to invite at least 2-3 guest lecturers per semester to run their own courses. So I will have to manage this circus and run a full program of research and teaching with these resources. While you can see that the institution itself provides an excellent basis for achieving this, the professor must supplement in-house resources with external funding for on-going research. Currently the Humboldt University ranks number one in Germany in terms of externally funded research, so there will be good models for me to follow as well as support, but the expectations to perform well in this area are high. The professor is

completely autonomous in terms of ability to shape the program and control the budget. This means a lot of work but also the possibility to realize a particular vision of what I think the field of scholarship could benefit from right now, so its exciting and will be a challenge with lots of new responsibilities.

YANA: *Given these substantial responsibilities, do you think that you will be able to maintain the sort of high level research profile that has defined your career up until now? For example, how frequently do you anticipate being able to get back to the field?*

Toni: To be honest, although I do enjoy teaching and being part of a bigger academic unit, ultimately I love this job for the opportunities it gives for fieldwork and also the writing that follows. And the field for me means going to work with peoples in very remote and extreme places, most recently, for example, with nomad hunters on the Changthang plateau of northern Tibet, the highest permanently inhabited region on earth, and with Tibeto-Burman hunter-gatherers in Arunachal Pradesh in the southeastern Himalaya, a complex of rugged mountain jungles and gorges which are among the world's wettest and most inaccessible places. If anyone were to think I was living under the spell of some sort of anthropological romanticism or trying to emulate the life of a 19th century adventurer, well I would have to admit that it might be partly true, and that does not bother me. I love my research and the fact that the academy continues to enable it! So, will it all continue in Berlin? I don't see that much will change. Funding is not an issue for me now, so its only a question of forward planning, good time management and having a dependable team of people supporting me in the Institute. There is a 3 month block of non-teaching time over European summer plus another 6 week block between semesters in the Spring: this summer I am going to spend 6 weeks in northern Tibet and next March will be spent in Arunachal Pradesh-how's that! It might, of course, be interesting if you ask me the same question again in a few years time and see what I say then!

YANA: *Do you know of any colleagues already at the University with whom you will want to work or do you envision yourself having to manufacture your own intellectual oxygen?*

Toni: This is one of the big reasons to move there. Berlin has a population the same size as New Zealand, so it supports three major universities: The Humboldt, the Technical University and the Free University. I already have good links with interesting scholars at all three campuses (mainly in Anthropology, Religious Studies and Central Asian Studies) and we are planning various collaborations and will certainly share some students (who are able to do courses between the different institutions). Then there are the research only institutes, like the well-known Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, which brings in a great array of international scholars for longer visits, and they usually have some interesting "think tank" type meetings in progress that one can participate in. On top of this I still have a European-wide network from my former years of working there, so there is a great potential for all sorts of intellectual exchanges. I have 4 different colloquiums and conferences to go to around Europe already this year. I can't wait to do this without any long-haul flight to endure (too bad about the air points...).

YANA: *What will you miss most about living and working in New Zealand?*

Toni: Apart, of course, from dear family, friends and colleagues, the following: The sweeping view of Wellington harbour from our house in Korokoro; the Tuis in the garden outside my study window; the 15 minute commute; and speaking English. I just returned from the annual Jackson Street festival in Petone and I realize I will really miss our truly multi-cultural local community here. Workwise it is more difficult to say, since I wouldn't be leaving if I were satisfied here. What I will miss has actually already become a memory, and that is working in the Religious Studies Department during my first few years at Victoria, before we were forced into the present School arrangement. Those were good times. Hard work often, but there was a real spontaneity and optimistic energy in the place, some good fun too. It at least often felt (whether rightly or wrongly) like we were putting together a vision of what we ourselves wanted the Department to be like rather than one which was more purely a response to new administrative mechanisms and the latest spasms of university policy.