

RETRO REVIEW SYMPOSIUM

The Inner Mounting Flame

The Mahavishnu Orchestra with John McLaughlin, ‘The Inner Mounting Flame’: John McLaughlin (*guitar*), Jan Hammer (*keyboards*), Jerry Goodman (*violin*), Rick Laird (*bass*), Billy Cobham (*drums*); recorded August 1971, New York City, New York. Columbia Records (CK 31067), 1971.

Review I by Walter Kolosky

Preamble



I have listened to The Mahavishnu Orchestra’s ‘The Inner Mounting Flame’ at least a thousand times. During my study of the band, I have read hundreds of reviews. For various publications and books, I’ve written about the album numerous times. You can imagine trying to find a new take for *Self & Society* is not the easiest of things to do! Therefore, I have decided to transport myself back in time contemporaneously with the release of ‘The Inner Mounting Flame’ in 1971, and present a review devoid of hindsight, as if discovering Mahavishnu for the very first time.

Walter Kolosky

The word on the streets is that The Mahavishnu Orchestra will blow your mind. The band made its debut opening-up for John Lee Hooker in the late summer at the Gaslight in Greenwich Village. The club held them over for weeks, sometimes cancelling the scheduled headliners. Despite that, the superlatives I heard being tossed around seemed a little too much.

After listening to ‘The Inner Mounting Flame’, I now know what all the hubbub was about. If anything, they were understating things. The group’s hypnotic hyper-electric mantra-like riffs and tight ensemble playing is going to set some new hard-to-reach standards. This music is an amalgam of the blues and rock; with complex rhythms, jazz improvisation and Indian spices. If you turn your stereo up – and you should – it is all presented at decibel levels most often registered on a runway at JFK Airport. Columbia’s audio engineer walked out of the sessions because the deafening sound levels weren’t allowing him to think. The virtuosity is off the charts. The distortion is downright insulting. The speed-playing is insane. Yet, at

the drop of a hat, the music can become quite serene and beautiful.

Guitarist John McLaughlin is from England and is best known for his far-out playing with Miles Davis and Tony Williams. Those familiar with his contributions to Williams’ Lifetime and Davis’ albums will notice an impossible ratcheting up. Billy Cobham is an ex-Army marching band drummer from Panama who has played with Horace Silver and the jazz-rock group Dreams. Czech keyboard player Jan Hammer was a child prodigy and played piano for Sarah Vaughan. Jerry Goodman is a rock violinist from Chicago who cut his teeth in the jazz-rock-folk group The Flock. McLaughlin knew Irish musician Rick Laird from his days in London. At one time, Laird was the house bassist at Ronnie Scott’s jazz club and later played in Buddy Rich’s big band.

There are eight tunes on the album. The band has been opening its live shows with the rousing ‘Meeting Of The Spirits’. A dramatic prologue, marked by a triumphant dissonant fanfare and drummer Billy Cobham’s thrashing, calls the

meeting to order. The song is in 6/4 time, with McLaughlin's ethereal but penetrating guitar arpeggio establishing the tune's character. Goodman's violin and Laird's bass usher in a repeating pattern on top of the arpeggio. Over a Cobham backbeat, Goodman and McLaughlin introduce the song's main theme. The motif is deceptively simple, but it is not played simply. What is this I am hearing? Is the record at the right speed? A few measures of relative tranquility receive Jan Hammer's tasteful electric piano fills. Once again, the band kicks into high gear, constantly accelerating as the theme ascends to another resolution before repeating. McLaughlin's now familiar opening arpeggio re-emerges in the composition's closing strains. This is elevating!

'Dawn' begins in the odd meter of 7, but it is so beautifully performed it doesn't seem forced. The music bubbles up with a subtle electric piano introducing a new spring day. An intensifying head, played together by Goodman and McLaughlin, merges with Hammer's delicate morning offering while Laird builds on his bass theme. The refined tension, already inherent in the melody, quickly rises and then subsides. McLaughlin's solo summons the listener to an electric hoedown. Goodman's solo, supported by McLaughlin's rapid-change chord structures and Cobham's drumming, is especially impressive.

'The Noonward Race' is pure energy from the outset. McLaughlin's insistent chords are all over Cobham's percussive attack. The two propel each other limitlessly in an uncanny telepathy. The pair's frenetic forays are joined by Goodman and Hammer. Another introductory segment is birthed by Jerry Goodman, who plays through a Leslie speaker. At this point the players restate a resolving riff, increasing velocity with each cycle. The musicians play cues coming out of their solos by adding an extra repetition each time around. Jan Hammer's electric piano solo is filtered through a ring modulator. McLaughlin unleashes a scorching guitar solo, full of fire and light, improvising on the main theme. He is eventually reunited with his cohorts. The band

then slowly retreats, as McLaughlin and Cobham re-establish the vibe of their opening volleys to bring the race to the finish line. No one has time to ask why it is so important to race to noon. I am having trouble breathing.

'A Lotus On Irish Streams' features McLaughlin on acoustic guitar, Goodman on violin and Jan Hammer on acoustic piano. With 'The Noonward Race' still bouncing against the now mushy walls inside of my head, along comes this tranquil, classically influenced excursion. It seems incongruous to be shocked by such a placid piece of music. In this sense Mahavishnu's quieter moments can be just as jarring as the band's most explosive ones. McLaughlin and Goodman play the melody in a pleasing unison. The piece is beautiful and the chops displayed throughout are ridiculous.

Cobham's drum shuffle begins 'Vital Transformation'. Actually, it isn't a shuffle. Cobham can play in 9/8 time in such a natural flowing manner that it *sounds* like a shuffle. McLaughlin introduces a dastardly multi-note pattern. Goodman enters, playing in quick time; first high on the neck and then sliding down it. The repetition builds tension. En masse, the band balances the tune's restless anxiety with a powerful but soothing section dominated by Goodman and McLaughlin's soaring lines. Cue another preposterous McLaughlin solo. The piece reverts again, only to be diverted by the reappearance of Cobham's muscular shuffle. A group fadeout, accented by Hammer's ring-modulated electric piano, completes the transformation.

The subterranean 'The Dance of Maya' doubles as an electric foot-stomper. Its lengthy opening guitar riff and Laird's bass accompaniment are both haunting and bluesy. Cobham's boogie beat, with an extra one thrown in for good measure, supports it. This section would make a good soundtrack for a modern remake of *Dracula*. A clarion call of a melody is squeezed in via John McLaughlin's guitar and Goodman's violin. Suddenly, without warning, there is a hard right turn. The Mahavishnu Orchestra gets down like Papa John Creach and

Hot Tuna! Listen to that violin! Listen to that guitar! Listen to those drums! Listen to that electric piano. Listen to that bass! The 20/8 time foot-stomping section dissolves into some serious shredding before the tune is overlapped by the reappearance of the opening riff.

‘You Know You Know’ enters slowly and deliberately. Surprisingly, for this LP, the tune is in a basic 4/4; but Mahavishnu’s 4/4 doesn’t sound basic. A repeating nine-note pattern on electric guitar is seamlessly joined by Cobham’s accents and eventual backbeat. Goodman’s violin mimics McLaughlin’s lines. Bassist Laird joins as Jan Hammer contributes light, but emphatic, electric-piano runs. A focus on the main pattern increases the tension. Short outbursts impose themselves. ‘You Know You Know’ wants to be played faster, but the players will not oblige. Cobham’s rhythmic solo leads to the sudden end of the piece. Strangely, the tune goes nowhere and everywhere simultaneously. We are left hanging, but sated.

After an opening guitar and drum salvo, ‘Awakening’ is reinforced by the addition of violin and electric piano. The Orchestra is a juggernaut. The melody, played way too fast to grasp, is secondary to the furious execution. Billy Cobham’s turnaround leads to a repeat of the initial segment. An aggressive groove serves as underpinning for a righteous Goodman solo. McLaughlin’s chords punctuate. Jan Hammer solos next on electric piano played through a ring-modulator. McLaughlin’s turn features highly distorted exclamations. A short Cobham feature is followed by a restatement of the main theme. It all ends in a chaotic crash.

Not everyone will be able to get their heads around this music. I think some may think they will, but they won’t. The concept of mixing jazz and rock has been floating around on the edges of the ether in recent years. Until now, however, no one has harnessed the idea as well as Mahavishnu. There are already signs that the band may even be embraced commercially, especially by rock fans. This would be a major breakthrough for a music that contains so much improvisation. The music’s Eastern spiritual

sub-text – much embraced these days – that underpins the presentation may also aid in its popularity.

The name of the band, ‘Mahavishnu’, comes from the spiritual name bestowed upon McLaughlin by his guru, Sri Chinmoy. It is said that McLaughlin’s deep spiritual leanings are the driving force in the formation and the music of the Mahavishnu Orchestra. The song titles, all McLaughlin compositions, certainly give a clue. A small album insert that features a poem by Chinmoy provides even further evidence of this. Chinmoy stresses a life of study and meditation. According to the guru, this pathway becomes a person’s very essence. He teaches about developing the inner self in order to become self-realized, self-actualized and then, transcendent. It is a form of devotion to your own highest ideals. Accordingly, John McLaughlin seeks to become self-realized through his music; for him it is an offering to the Supreme. Although Rick Laird is said to have a strong interest in Eastern thought, the other members in the band, for the most part, take a more secular view of their art.

As a listener, how do you square music that comes at you like a freight train, beating your eardrums to a pulp, with any sort of spiritual vision or devotion to self-improvement? Perhaps you have to be willing to surrender yourself to a sonic imperative – so that just you and the music exist – using it as a vehicle for a higher self-understanding. Or you simply enjoy The Mahavishnu Orchestra for what it is: the most exciting development in both jazz and rock in our lifetime.

WALTER KOLOSKY is the author of the acclaimed book about the Mahavishnu Orchestra, *Power, Passion and Beauty*. His *Follow Your Heart* studies McLaughlin’s music, song by song, since 1969. Both books have featured on the Berklee College of Music curriculum. Walter is currently working on a project chronicling the band’s tour history. He is also co-host of the popular Jazz Rocks Podcast.

Review II by Ken Trethewey

The Passage of Time

My new friend Alexa is both helpful and voluble on the subject of religion. Clearly, the word can mean different things to different people. One thing seems certain: some of the major religions have been diverted from their course of common humanity by those with ulterior motives, principles of love and peaceful co-existence hijacked into tenets of hate and greed. Whatever its meaning today, religion was a result of our inner desires to understand our place in the grand scheme of things. How did we get here?

For both theists and atheists, capitalism has become the religion *par excellence*, the ambition to acquire more and more wealth being trumped only by a perpetual dissatisfaction with its unattainability – another form of Chasing the Dragon. In utter contrast to the earth upon which we walk, there is nothing more abstract than money. Once we dealt in gold, its beautiful solidity promoting confidence and satisfaction in those lucky enough to have it. Then the precious metals were debased with nickel and copper, and strange pieces of paper took on a life of their own. Today, as even our coins and banknotes disappear for good, money itself has become digital, as worthless to our souls as the electrons that store it.

So where is all this taking us? Capitalism is leading us farther and farther away from the spiritual undertaking of our ancestors. In past millennia, the Earth's population lived in a basic and fundamental harmony, appreciative of the roles of the sun, moon and stars, and the fundamental forces of time and tide. The deep wisdom of the ancients enabled them to do great things; the planet was balanced for the future of humankind. That wisdom of our place in Nature has now been lost. Our only hope seems to be escape from the Earth in spaceships constructed by those who have hoovered up much of the planet's material wealth. In this doom-laden scenario there may yet be hope. As capitalism grinds inexorably towards its catastrophic

conclusion, the chances are that people will turn more and more towards religion of one sort or another – perhaps one in which humans are more concerned with their deep beliefs and common ancestry and care for the planet that gave us life.

About 50 years ago, John McLaughlin chose a spiritualist route in preference to a capitalist one and, since then, has never wavered in his decision. At a time in the early 1970s when isolated musical genres were melted in the fusion pot, John was perfectly placed to burn an indelible mark, both within himself and his profession. His creativity was channelled with unparalleled virtuosity through his chosen instrument using the medium of jazz. Then his turn to the East for spiritual guidance proved to be as wise as his desire to immerse himself in music without boundaries.

His decision to form his own band incorporating the name 'Mahavishnu', inscrutable to some like me, proved deeply inspired with the passage of time, as did the name he chose for the title of their first album, 'The Inner Mounting Flame' (IMF). It was common in those days to hear comments like, 'I've never heard anything like it'. Music itself had at last thrown off the shackles of classification into genres, and there were many innovative approaches from jazz musicians inspired by the likes of Miles Davis. For John, it was Tony Williams who opened doors with his no-rules approach to jazz. Many of those fortunate enough to hear the band Lifetime under Tony's leadership came away with the stunned admission that they had, indeed, never heard anything like it. More than the impression left by Miles' 'Bitches Brew' album, it was the sound of Tony Williams' Lifetime that was carried over to the IMF album, with the added ingredients of eastern tonalities. The result was another instance of previously unheard-of sound that would bewitch most of those exposed to it. And in remarkable contrast to many other innovative bands of the time, John's future groups were destined to carry his unique brand right down to the present day.

John's selection of his fellow band members was the great enabler. Jerry Goodman's violin – an instrument that was not generally to be found in jazz at this time – played a big role in achieving that special sound, and the speed with which he accompanies John's lightning riffs is extraordinary. Jan Hammer was benefiting from the rapid developments in keyboard technology and applying his virtuosity to John's complex melodic frameworks. Billy Cobham, largely unrecognised as a top flight drummer at this point, would demonstrate just how far ahead of the competition he actually was. Suddenly the world began to realise that anyone who could perform at the intensity and pace demanded by tracks like 'The Noonward Race' and 'Vital Transformation' must be truly extraordinary. As a result, after IMF, Billy was rewarded by being placed at the very top of his profession by most informed commentators. We must not ignore Rick Laird's contribution, for the many changes to musicianship were affecting different instruments at different rates. Rick was ahead of his time on electric bass, and another five years needed to elapse before the sound of Jaco Pastorius made a transformational impact on the sound of the electric bass. Bassist Etienne Mbappe's place in John's present band is light years away from the sound of Laird's vital foundations to explosive tracks like 'Meeting Of The Spirits' or 'Awakening'.

The freedom of expression John found at last in his own band, with such astonishing support from his colleagues, is boundless in IMF, where Coltrane's sheets of sound were now presented on guitar at unimaginable speed. It is as if the spirits themselves are flowing past our ears with the energy of some Caribbean hurricane. Yet the serene calm of 'A Lotus On Irish Streams' and 'You Know, You Know' are just the eyes of the storms that are to return. For me, there are no favourites. 'The Inner Mounting Flame' represents a complete work of sublime art that cannot be subdivided in the way that digital streaming demands. How can today's listeners achieve the same spiritual reward by hopping randomly through play-lists?

John's religion linked spirits with flames of enlightenment by means of instrumental music abstracted by the omission of distracting lyrics. This has always been John's muse and, over the 50 years since that first album, it has continued to offer his listeners a bridge into a beautiful spiritual world where global politics thrust upon us by a new breed of short-sighted oligarchs is irrelevant to life as a citizen of the Universe. We need only remember later album titles like 'Between Nothingness and Eternity', 'My Goal's Beyond', 'A Handful of Beauty', 'Natural Elements', 'To The One', and many others, to appreciate the depth of John's conviction that there is more to life than this world alone.

To eulogise that science denies the possibility of the spiritual world is to deny reality itself, for science is deeply troubled at present. Some 90 per cent of the matter in the Universe is 'dark' and unknown. Scientists have resorted to ridiculous ideas like string theory and parallel Universes because they cannot answer the most fundamental questions. They, like us, have become too remote from Nature. To indulge their fantasies, scientists have abused philosophy to underpin capitalism and drive us still further from a full understanding of the meaning of life. Those like McLaughlin with true spiritual insight are far closer to Awakening than atheists, materialists and those with hate in their souls.

This condemned planet, engulfed by capitalism, now works only by the flow of money, a quantity as far removed from Nature as Pluto. The passage of time removes us ever farther, with continuous reduction in our chances of survival, destroyed by climate change, pollution and over-population. Our only hope of evading catastrophe is to rediscover our relationship with Mother Earth and abandon this fruitless contract with wealth creation.

The music of the Indian subcontinent remains today as close to Nature as it ever was. John's immersion therein, from day one of his fusion career, continues to be translated into music that penetrates our souls and reminds us whenever

we listen that John set sail on his true course all those years ago. Undeviated by the world around him, still he invites us to join him with every note of his guitar. The reality is that between nothingness and eternity is just one, time-drenched universe. Our lives are a minuscule part of the passage of time.

DR KEN TRETHERWEY is a retired marine engineer based in Cornwall. He has written books about corrosion engineering, lighthouses – and jazz. When not pursuing his interest in pharology, Ken operates his own publishing business, Jazz-Fusion Books. As well as *Ancient Lighthouses, and Other Lighted Aids to Navigation*, published in 2018, Ken is himself a prolific jazz writer, with books on John McLaughlin, jazz-fusion, Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, Pat Metheny, the band Weather Report and the Brecker Brothers. *Contact:* ken.trethewey@pharology.eu.

Review III by James Watson

‘The Inner Mounting Flame’ by the Mahavishnu Orchestra is very aptly named, as the playing on the album from all band members has an intensity and fire which is plain to see from the very first track. Every musician in the band has such mastery over their instruments, which gives a feeling of excitement and awe to the listener. The track listing is: side one – 1. ‘Meeting Of The Spirits’; 2. ‘Dawn’; 3. ‘The Noonward Race’; and 4. ‘A Lotus On Irish Streams’; and side two – 1. ‘Vital Transformation’; 2. ‘The Dance Of Maya’; 3. ‘You Know You Know’ and 4. ‘Awakening’. In this review I would like to focus on three tracks that particularly stood out for me.

‘Meeting Of The Spirits’ begins with some powerful and sophisticated chords; the overall impression is one of drama and mystery, with prominently guitar, keyboard and drum flourishes. This gives way to a propulsive groove with an Eastern flavour, then a fantastic passionate melody. John McLaughlin then plays some very tasty pentatonic licks over the form

with an overdriven distorted tone on his Gibson SG, then the song becomes more reflective for a while. The original motif comes in again with the Eastern flavour, and this structure repeats a few times, building to crescendos and then releasing to more quiet moments. I love this track as the musicians’ interplay seems so organic, and the atmosphere they create is so alive and electric.

‘The Noonward Race’ packs a real punch, and I can hear some influence of Jimi Hendrix on this track. [Jimi and John famously jammed together in the late 1960s – ed.] The first chords sound like ‘Purple Haze’ with a similar rhythm, and at one point Jerry Goodman is given free reign to go wild on the violin, then Jan Hammer plays a solo with a crazy tone on his keyboard at breakneck speed. Then John McLaughlin plays a full-on speedy solo with a distorted guitar tone again, and Billy Cobham’s drumming is a powerhouse of propulsive rhythm throughout.

My third pick for this review, ‘A Lotus On Irish Streams’, has such a beautiful melody reminiscent in places of the Irish folk song ‘Women of Ireland’ by Seán Ó Riada. The wonderful sensitivity of the playing between McLaughlin, Goodman and Hammer is very moving, and also the impressive virtuosity cannot be underestimated or unappreciated by the listener. I love the flow of this piece and the sincerity of the performances.

Overall, this record holds many pleasures and is well worth a listen.

JAMES WATSON, born in the year of ‘IMF’s release, is a classical guitarist playing jazz and other musical styles. With solo concerts throughout Europe, he has released seven CDs playing solo classical repertoire, and his own compositions, including collaborations with, for example, saxophonist Patsy Gamble, flamenco guitarist Cuffy and pianist Raymundo Fernandez. James has also appeared on BBC Radio 3’s Petroc Trelowny morning show.

BOOK REVIEW

Glen Park, *Chakra Healing Therapy: Awaken Spiritual Energies and Heal Emotional Wounds*, Destiny Books, Rochester, Vermont, 2020, 312 pp, ISBN-13: 978-1644110492, price (paperback) \$24.99 (UK, £18.99, Kindle £10.99).

Reviewed by **Sofia Johansson**

A surprising read that I strongly recommend for *all* conscious-seeking individuals and for anyone who works with and for others; such as educators of all levels, scientists, therapists, economists, environmentalists, journalists, artists, and people in the position of leadership. *Chakra Healing Therapy* is especially important for those in positions of leadership, for the book gives not only much-needed insight into the human and planetary condition, but also practical exercises to raise one's own consciousness; allowing them to discover and work through their blind spots or 'shadows'.

Glen begins her book in the preface by describing her personal journey. I was delighted to discover that it was a preface worth reading that gave me a feeling of curiosity and respect for its author. She writes that 'this book is about the intelligence that speaks through the body, which, as we learn its language, helps us understand ourselves better'. I would like to add that in my view, it is so much more than this.

The Seven Chakras are covered in depth, with application that crosses many practice areas – hence my recommendation that it is useful reading for everyone, especially for those in positions of leadership, influence or power. Each chapter provides a short summary of the chakra under consideration, and then offers broader descriptions that cover the Physical Level, the Psychological Level, the Psychic Level, the Spiritual Level; and also summaries of Cultural Considerations which are full of insight, crossing many modalities of thought and much relevant research which provokes ideas of remedies to many of our current global crises. Each chapter then concludes with a case

study, and techniques and exercises which can aid in the balancing of that which is imbalanced.

The Introduction is a beautiful chapter that weaves the essential development of the human being from in the womb into adulthood, with descriptive diagrams and charts representing different perspectives from around the world, including ancient Hindu and Tibetan drawings and descriptions, to Chinese medicine and its associated glands and organs for each chakra energy centre, to a helpful drawing of Jenny Wade's model of developmental psychology (cf. her holonomic theory of consciousness evolution) which corresponds with our unfolding consciousness. Wade's metastructure is in fact used throughout the book, which is useful both in understanding each chakra system and its impact on the individual, but also in exploring how each chakra can impact an entire community. Understanding the chakras in this manner can aid the leader, practitioner or negotiator in understanding the way in which a society or culture emphasises some chakras over others, and how this can lead to misunderstanding and great conflict in its interactions, both with its own member groups as well as with other cultures.

The beauty is that Glen has exercises for each chakra; approaches that one can use to improve one's own understanding into oneself, one's community, one's culture, as well as to heal the gaps of consciousness we are currently experiencing with our fellow countries and our fellow beings; including Mother Earth herself.

The exercises are grounded and practical, and not invasive. They do not require one to reveal information but work on an energetic level, with

profound results. At a time where many feel exposed and wary of yet more information, Glen offers tools that can heal oneself and aid in bridging the many gaps we are suffering from at the present time.

Exploring each chapter with you in depth would be ideal, but for the sake of this review I will give only a glimpse of the wealth in this book by choosing just one.

Chapter 3: The Solar Plexus Chakra

The beauty of this chapter is that Glen ties together many practices, theories and philosophies in order for us to be able to fully grasp the importance of a balance between the *Solar Pingula* and *Lunar Ida* channels of this energy centre. The understanding and recognition of these two channels are similar to understanding masculine and feminine; left-brain dominance vs right-brain dominance; the political 'left' and the political 'right'. She explains how each channel has developed and led to its own 'consciousness' in its expression or expulsion of energy. The Achievement (Solar Pingula) Consciousness and the Affiliative (Lunar) Consciousness are explored, including how these are played out in society, exposing the weaknesses we all suffer when one consciousness is dominant for too long.

The Achievement Consciousness is linked to Patriarchy, competition, material success and values that can be outwardly seen or measured; like the global appreciation of the millionaire who is seen as more deserving because his life was focused on Achievement Consciousness and his material wealth demonstrates how much he has 'achieved'.

Glen's knowledge of an eclectic mixture of theorists (psychologists, scientists, anthropologists, philosophers, spiritualists and economists, to name a few) is impressive, and she weaves together various thoughts and theories from this mix to illustrate important points. For example, I learned that Spencer (an economist) is the real founder of the theory of 'survival of the fittest', and that Darwin, while

accepting this interpretation, also emphasised the importance of co-operation as a key survival strategy in the natural world.

In reading her section titled 'Cultural Considerations', I was able to reflect and see how the capitalist ideology that we have allowed to define our past and current societies, at least since the industrial revolution, has potentially contributed strongly to the 'pandemic' dilemma we are currently in. Glen explains how such an ideology, being dominant, asserts that those who are not 'materially successful', like the poor, are blamed for their poverty and seen as deserving it. It acts as a powerful influence on our young people, and dominates our education system. Many young people emerge from their education with left-brain dominance even if they began with balanced or right-brain dominance. Or, put another way, perhaps many children had a healthy balance between the Solar Pingula and Lunar Ida of the Solar Plexus Chakra; a healthy balance between their masculine and feminine abilities and traits. However, as 'achievement' is the focus of most educational systems, many young people lose that beautiful and much-needed balance, and come out worse for it. In relation to our current disastrous educational system which has been lambasted during this strange time of a 'pandemic', I would say that sadly, our system has become even more Achievement Conscious. Not only have the 'feminine' qualities of intuition, holistic approaches and inquisitive minds been denigrated, they are being attacked. It is a real concern of mine, that we are so out of balance that, at worst, we are potentially schooling young people to become obsessive-compulsive psychopaths.

With educator and psychologist being two of my own 'areas', I found Glen's exploration of this imbalance not only interesting, but helpful. She mentions that in the past, all of published child-development literature was dominated by 'Pingula' or 'masculine' thinking. This was a result of most, if not all, of the early published developmental psychologists being male. However, in the 1980s we had Carol Gilligan

lay the groundwork for understanding and recognising the equal importance of Affiliative Consciousness. Too much rational, analytical thinking could lead to a global environmental crisis such as we have never seen (cf. Iain McGilchrist's writings). 'Right-brain thinking', or Lunar Ida Channel, or Affiliative Consciousness, is important, and is what could potentially lead us out of this near destruction. The desire to help others, care of the poor, the sick, the vulnerable while valuing relationships and family are all aspects of the Affiliative Consciousness, and are precisely what we need at this time.

I found it interesting that she mentions that Iain McGilchrist, in his book *The Master and His Emissary*, believes that the left brain, or 'masculine, Achievement Consciousness', should act as servant of the more holist-thinking right or 'feminine' brain. This would prevent it from getting caught in its own positive-feedback loop of its small logical parameters.

It seems this could not be more evident now. We are on the brink of a complete meltdown, and our media is dominated by only rational, analytical approaches. School children are also being fed fear and 'scientific' solutions, to the exclusion of love, exploration, curiosity and freedom to make and admit mistakes.

I cannot help but wonder what Glen is intuiting about all of the chaos at the moment. It would seem that balancing these channels is more important now than at any other point in history that I know of – another reason why I strongly recommend *Chakra Healing Therapy* for all conscious-seeking individuals living at this time. We need not be master practitioner or even 'energy healer', but Glen's book lays the groundwork and gives such a wide variety of understanding our current dilemma with a breadth I did not expect. We will *all* need multi-layers of understanding if we are to pull through this 'crisis', honouring life and living beings.

Glen's book, then, offers the reader insight, tools, understanding and a broad spectrum of research, practice and knowledge which spans a rich variety of continents, cultures, science and mythology – all of which ultimately leaves the reader with the ability to practise and promote balance and healing on many levels, and in many paradigms. One could say it is an insightful manual of how one might put ideologies like the Three-fold Social Order (a framework for social reform developed by Rudolf Steiner a century ago) into practice. In reading and using her wisdom and tools, one could develop insightful economic systems, welfare and social-care systems, educational systems and places of science and exploration that worked on a practical and an *intuitive* level. If we shared such an approach with all ages at each stage of development, we would grow a society that could recognise its own imbalances and could self-correct.

Being a former teacher and perpetual educator myself, Glen Park's approach covers most learning types; the visual, auditory, sensory and kinaesthetic. I have added the book to my small trove of essential tools for practice, and I have been doing some of the exercises daily myself. Thank you, Glen Park, for a masterpiece of thoughtful and timely work relevant for our time. It is my great hope that it can aid in balancing our current Achievement Dominant society before we have destroyed our selves and our very home.

About the contributor

Sofia Johansson, Mpsych, MBPsS, T.E.A.C.H.H., CADC has relentless passion for a future balancing new tech with principles that enhance, not destroy, life. She has lived, studied and worked internationally in eight different countries with visionaries like Grace Lee Boggs and Prof. Frithoff Bergman. Her rich, multi-cultural education and her direct experience enhances her understanding of the vital need to ensure a human future at our Digital Age frontier.

POETRY REVIEW

Brian Thorne, *Purple Vestments: A Collection of Poems and Reflections from a Time of Lockdown*, The Norwich Centre for Personal, Professional and Spiritual Development (Occasional Publications), Norwich, 2021, £10 plus p&p; available from the Norwich Centre on Norwich (01603) 617709, or by email from admin@norwichcentre.org.

Reviewed by **Julian Nangle**

S&S Poetry Editor

This is a moving collection of sonnets, with reflective poems upon each of the sonnets, uniquely offering the poet's own interpretation upon the poetic impulse originally followed and presented in sonnet form. The reflections are generally written a year after the sonnet, although in some cases it is only a matter of months.

As the poet explains, both in his Introduction and in his Afterword, the collection is prompted by the Covid pandemic, the first sonnet having been written on 26th February 2020 (Ash Wednesday) and the last on 17th February 2021 (also Ash Wednesday).

The author, Brian Thorne, is an old friend of *Self & Society* and is an Emeritus Lay Canon of Norwich Cathedral; and his standpoint in these poems speaks to this reality:

I put on purple this morning
Not only because it's Ash Wednesday
But so that I might experience without
hindrance
What is
Rather than fester in knotted
Cognitive complexity.
(From 'Supposing at Christmas: Reflection')

The original sonnet upon which the above reflects is dated 31st December 2020 and the reflection is dated 17th February 2021, a mere month and a half later. This poem in particular hits home as the poet shares with us that it has been inspired after reading Jill Bolte Taylor, a woman of considerable wisdom whose book *Whole Brain Living* happens to be a book this reviewer is reading himself at the moment, as I write.

Several of the sonnets and poems have already appeared in *Self & Society*, but of the others that have not, I would mention 'To Say Goodnight: Reflection', which I hope it may be possible to print in full, along with its 'parent' sonnet (see the forthcoming winter issue – ed.). The honesty about the poem's origins and inspiration illustrates perfectly the intention the poet has; to illuminate and share a transition he is experiencing through loss and grief into the light of understanding, learning and love.

Reference

Bolte Taylor, J. (2021). *Whole Brain Living: The Anatomy of Choice and the Four Characters That Drive Our Life*. Carlsbad, Calif.: Hay House.

BOOK NOTICE¹

**David Lorimer, *A Quest for Wisdom: Inspiring Purpose on the Path of Life*,
Aeon Books, London, 2020, 354 pp, ISBN 978-1913504762, price £24.99, index.**

David Lorimer has been *the* leading light in the excellent Scientific and Medical Network (SMN) for several decades, and also the editor of their wonderful *Review* magazine – the best source of books reviews on ‘the transpersonal’ and spiritual perspectives that I know, anywhere. I doubt that there is any editor of any publication on the planet who has read more books, and then expertly reviewed them, than David!

I first came across David in the 1990s at the SCM’s path-breaking ‘Beyond the Brain’ conferences (e.g. House, 1996), which David chaired; and I quoted his book *Whole in One* in one of my first-ever publications. Since then he has also written or edited a number of outstanding books, including a biography of Prince Charles, radical writings on education, and a brilliant co-edited collection on new-paradigm thinking (Lorimer & Robinson, 2010). I was therefore thrilled to hear about David’s new book, which describes his own spiritual journey in compelling and inspiring detail.

David’s life journey is a fascinating one: a writer, lecturer, poet and editor who left a successful banking career aged just 24 to devote himself to a quest for wisdom and a deeper understanding of life and the cosmos – and the SCM was therefore a natural home for him. In 2020 he was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award as a Visionary Leader by the Visioneers International Network, and in 2021, the Aboca Human Ecology Prize.

A Quest for Wisdom assembles 25 of David’s acclaimed essays, with penetrating writings on some of the most important spiritual seers of any era – for example, Victor Frankl, Emmanuel Swedenborg, Peter Deunov, Radhakrishnan, David Bohm, Dag Hammarskjöld, and Voltaire.

The essays in the book explore philosophy, meaning and spirituality; consciousness, death and transformation; and responsibility, ethics and society. Issues engaged with include the nature of life and death, questions of meaning and purpose, and the challenge of how we can live more harmoniously together. David’s own journey echoes the core concerns of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, in seeking to illuminate our common task of ‘becoming more finely and deeply human’. I will take great pleasure in reviewing David’s book in an extended review essay in the next issue of our online magazine.

Richard House

1 Because this issue of the journal is already well over our usual length, only a short summary notice of David Lorimer’s important book appears here. A much longer review essay on the book will appear in the next issue – Editor.

References

- House, R. (1996). Conference report: Beyond the Brain, Cambridge, August 1995. *Self and Society*, 23 (6): 30–1.
- Lorimer, D. (1990). *Whole in One: The Near-death Experience and the Ethics of Interconnectedness*. Harnondsworth: Penguin Arkana.
- Lorimer, D. & Robinson, O. (eds) (2010). *A New Renaissance: Transforming Science, Spirit and Society*. Edinburgh: Floris Books.