

The second part ranges over a number of terrains including climate change, green economics, geology, the precautionary principle in engineering, and new ways of teaching science so as to incorporate an ecological ethic. Part Three – Synthesis – returns to cultural factors and raises questions about the adequacy of scientific epistemology. Member Wangari Maathai writes about her emancipation from gender stereotypes and structural causes of environmental degradation; Brian Moss shows how a mechanistic mentality invariably leads to what he calls a fragmentationist world view; and Harmke Kamminga outlines some of the essential ideas which have influenced the

development of scientific practice. She analyses its 'interventive' nature, links with progress and progressive thought, then with governments and power. She indicates how accepted truths are established in the wake of contests for authority and cautions against confusing predictive with explanatory power as well as logical deduction with prediction. The overall message of the book is the need to recognize not only the embeddedness of science within nature and culture, but also the necessity for a rethinking of science leading to a revisioning of the world as a whole and therefore of our relationships to it – ecologically, politically and economically.

Ecoyoga

by HENRYK SKOLIMOWSKI (SMN)

Gaia Books, 1994, 191 pp., £10.99 h/b. ISBN 1-85675-071-X

The inspiration for this book came from a friend asking what kind of exercises Henryk was going to give students of eco-philosophy to reflect and embody his main ideas. The result is this beautiful and touching work which is at once a meditation on aspects of the inner life and a series of quotations and yogas. It is a distillation of many years of deep thinking which issues in epigrammatic observations and wise advice on the art of living which occasionally reminded me of André Maurois.

Among the yogas elucidated are those of empathy, reverence, silence, listening and

empowerment. Henryk reminds us the time is our friend and that we are all capable of identifying with the sublime in ourselves and others. This means cultivating our sensitivities and fostering the qualities of peace, hope and courage so that we find our vision. On Hope: it is the scaffolding of our very being; and Courage: it supports our quest for meaning and fuels our action and imagination. This book expresses Henryk's inner voice and is produced with a beauty which corresponds with reflective and nurturing content.



General

Hypocrisy and Dissent within the Findhorn Foundation: Towards a Sociology of a New Age Community

by STEPHEN J. CASTRO

New Media Books 1996. xv + 240 pp., p/b ISBN 0-9526881-0-7

Review by Simon Kidd

This book provides an important insight into the disparity between the professed

ideals and the actual reality of a New Age community; namely, the Findhorn Foundation in the far north of Scotland. As its subtitle indi-

cates, it is intended as a contribution towards a sociology of such a community. The author has meticulously collected his data and presents it with notable perspicuity in an attempt to inform both sociologists and general public alike. Its broader significance lies, I believe, in the possible implications of the case in question for our perception of similar organizations.

The Findhorn Foundation is, as sociologist Eileen Barker has noted, 'one of the best-known of the New Age communities in Britain' (quoted p. xi). As such, its influence is considerable, having connections with similar communities worldwide. By 1993 the net worth of the Foundation's properties was quoted at £1.6 million, and the commercial turnover for its trading arm, New Findhorn Directions, was said to be £1.2 million.

In the light of its charitable status, its material wealth, and its obvious prestige in the New Age milieu, it is rather startling to learn something of the *modus operandi* of this organization. Its members claim to receive the 'direct guidance of God' This is a highly questionable basis for the administration of any organization, especially when one learns later in the book the basis on which the claim rests. Yet the process of 'attunement' is used in the Foundation to this day, and is applied to the whole spectrum of decision making. The danger, as Castro points out, lies in the sense of infallibility that such a belief provides. Its implications are very serious, as this book reveals.

The Findhorn Foundation has had numerous dissenters. In addition to its very strained relations with the indigenous populations of Findhorn and Forres, a number of those who have had internal experience of the organization, including the author, have noted the disparity between preaching and practice in a community nominally devoted to love, truth, and spiritual growth.

Several cases are presented, but the most striking one is that of Kate Thomas, who first came into contact with the Findhorn Foundation in 1988. She wrote an additional 100-page chapter for her autobiography, containing a detailed record of her subsequent experience. Thomas entered fully into the life of the community, but became increasingly dis-

concerted as time passed. She discovered that this supposedly spiritual centre was actually devoted to commercial therapies, and not even in a professional manner, but applied indiscriminately, often by people without recognized academic qualifications. (Castro points out that this is possible in the UK, due to the absence of the stricter legal controls which are in evidence in other European countries.) Her mildly expressed protests drew mostly hostility, from authority figures and fellow participants alike, and she was subsequently labelled, by the former group, as a 'troublemaker'. The situation was exacerbated by her stand against the introduction of Holotropic Breathwork™ in 1989 and by the publication of vol. 3 of her autobiography (with its additional material) in 1992.

Castro reveals Thomas as a person of great integrity, who was not willing to compromise principles in the face of injustice and hypocrisy. It seems that the more the members, and in particular the leaders, of the Foundation were confronted with their misdeeds, the more wilfully they refused to face up to them. Subsequently there was a great deal of publicity, at both local and national level. Among other significant events, we learn that the SCO commissioned a report by a forensic expert at Edinburgh University into the effects of hyperventilation, on the basis of which, in 1993, the Findhorn Foundation suspended its Holotropic Breathwork™ courses.

Kate Thomas was blocked from any closer involvement with the community, and even banned from its properties. She was never given an adequate explanation, nor a public hearing within the Foundation. Similar treatment was extended to anyone who supported her, and who likewise questioned the policies of those in positions of power. Castro points out that such censorship and aversion to criticism is typical of the cult mentality.

The book brings us up to 1995, with the situation still unresolved, at least to the satisfaction of the dissenters. In conclusion, I regard this as a timely publication. It provides material for a much needed investigation into the claims and activities, not just of the Findhorn Foundation, but of similar institutions in the New Age environment. Such institutions

should not be exempt from sociological analysis. But one doesn't have to be a sociologist to benefit from the book. Indeed, it is equally relevant to a general public in need of the sort of information it provides. Such information

must become more widely available, if contemporary society is to be able to make a distinction between that which is genuinely spiritual and that which only masquerades as such.

The Road Ahead

by BILL GATES

Viking, 1995, 286 pages, Hardback ISBN 0-670-85913-3

Review by Michael Brown

The Road Ahead is intended for non-specialists. It contains little jargon, and is a very readable account of how the information superhighway will develop over the next ten years. It is one person's view. It is the view of a technocrat and no such words as 'psychology', 'religion' or 'spirituality' appear in the index, although 'art' does. Such omissions should not deter the members of the SMN from reading the book for there is no doubt that the superhighway will change our lives and that there will be social upheavals in the process. In case anyone doubts that the superhighway will have a major impact, Gates offers the following advice and comments:

'My advice is to try to find out as much as possible about the technology that will touch you. The more you know about it the less disconcerting it will seem.'

'It is important that both good and bad points of the technological advances be discussed broadly so that society as a whole ... can guide its direction.'

'I think it is a wonderful time to be alive. There have never been so many opportunities to do things that were impossible before.'

Confidence in the scale of future developments is illustrated by the fact the sum allocated to research into Internet-related products by Bill Gates's company, Microsoft, for the next five years is \$500 million.

Another reason to buy the book is that any money earned Bill Gates from the sales of the book will be given to a fund used to buy computers for educational use around the world.

The timing and nature of future developments are not readily predictable as Gates himself admits:

'The information highway will lead to many destinations. I've enjoyed speculating about some of these. Doubtless I've made foolish predictions, but I hope not too many. In any case I'm excited to be on the journey.'

He foresees a stormy time ahead for entrepreneurs, where many will fail, but others will succeed beyond their dreams.

The historical review of developments in the computer industry, perhaps unsurprisingly, has an American slant. The story of the founding and growth of Microsoft is told in detail, and is a remarkable illustration of the breathtaking speed with which major developments can take place for the computer industry, and for computer users, when an entrepreneur sees the right perspective, as Gates certainly did.

The potential effects of the superhighway on education, business, the home, and monetary transactions are considered in detail. On balance, it is anticipated that the effects will be beneficial, but many new types of problem will arise. Among these will be moral problems such as the need to provide facilities for those who are not computer literate, or who cannot afford a terminal of their own. Pricing will become a political issue, and the needs of remote communities have to be considered.

Ubiquitous communications facilities will reduce the need for transport and lead to major changes in urban infrastructures. Manufacturers will have direct contact with customers and will be able to customize their products much more readily. Direct delivery will make middle men redundant. To avoid conflict, family members will probably need one interface with the superhighway each.