

Science, Paradox,
and the Moebius Principle:
The Evolution of a 'Transcultural'
Approach to Wholeness,
by Steven M. Rosen; State University of New York
Press, Albany, N.Y., 1994; softcover, 317 pages,
\$19.95 (also available in hardcover).

According to Stanislav Grof, the literature on creativity clearly demonstrates that significant breakthroughs in the fields of science, art, religion, and philosophy are characteristically the result of an inspiration mediated by nonordinary states of consciousness. Grof has distinguished at least two primary forms of inspiration.

Sometimes an individual is suddenly presented—in a dream, vision, fever, meditation, or other nonordinary state of consciousness—with the solution to a problem on which he or she has been unsuccessfully working, typically for a long time. An example would be the chemist August von Kekule, who arrived at the final solution to the formula of benzene with his dream of

book reviews

the *ouroboros* and its ingenious suggestion of the structure of the ring.

In other cases, however, the relationship between intuitive and discursive thinking is reversed—and the individual is presented, out of the blue, with an unprecedented insight into the nature of reality far in advance of its time: It can take years—even decades or centuries—to unfold the implications of such a visionary seed idea. An example is the idea that organic life originated in the ocean, which was initially formulated by the pre-Socratic philosopher Anaxagoras, but which had to await modern evolutionary biology for confirmation. Likewise the now familiar idea that reality is characterized by a mutual interpenetration of all things, which is found in ancient Chinese texts, has been developed more recently by the physicist David Bohm and others as an emerging paradigm in science.

Psychologist and philosopher Steven M. Rosen is a key contributor to the “new paradigm,” having worked with Bohm himself. Rosen was initially trained in experimental psychology, but has been diligently laboring for twenty-three years in the fields of theoretical physics, mathematics, parapsychology, topology, cosmology, and phenomenology.

While working on his dissertation, he experienced a hypnogogic vision with a powerful and frightening ecstatic component. He subsequently conjectured this was a kundalini awakening. Four years later, in 1972, his Ph.D. in hand, the process suddenly recommenced. Over a two-week period, Rosen experienced what he has described as a series of visionary insights into the nature of consciousness and the cosmos. These insights utterly transformed his sense of self and reality.

Rosen's new book provides a record of the evolution of his ideas, which he describes as a twenty-plus-year process of “unpacking” that two-week transformative experience. In it he traces “the development of the Moebius principle, a new way of approaching the foundations of science and philosophy. The strategy has been to confront crisis and fragmentation in contemporary thought by offering a concrete intuition of thoroughgoing wholeness” (p. 269).

Not all holisms are coherent, dynamic, and creative. Some, like Nazism and other totalitarian ideologies, aim for a closed and rigid totality while sacrificing values such as coherence, comprehensiveness, richness, complexity, and openness to change. Rosen is unwilling to make such sacrifices. Rosen is no conservative traditionalist; he sees such views as preserving dualism by exalting a static, orderly realm of supra-historical Being over and above a merely chaotic process of historical Becoming.

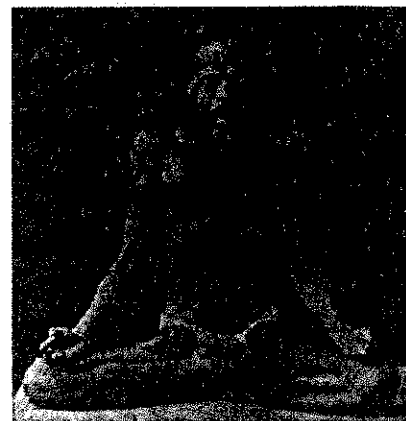
It may seem perverse to mention totalitarianism, traditionalism, and the new paradigm in the same breath. But in his important 1989 book, *Imaginary Landscape: Making Worlds of Myth and Science*, philosopher William Irwin Thompson openly broke with the New Age precisely because of what he had come to regard as its unabashedly reactionary character. Thompson argued for a new, non-authoritarian, non-regressive conception of wholeness, for which we need a living, moving geometry, a new topology of the sacred, a “processual morphology.”

If Thompson had been acquainted with Rosen's work, he doubtless would have recognized a kindred spirit. “In the Moebius principle,” Rosen writes, “wholeness is sought in the embodiment of paradox. . . . The wholeness in question is utterly fluid and dynamic, an unobstructed boundless flow” (p. 269).

By “paradox,” Rosen does not mean sheer contradiction—what he calls the negative sense of the word—for that would license every form of irrationality. The positive sense of paradox is to be “understood in the Zen-related sense of a wholeness so uncompromising that it confounds the dichotomies built into ordinary thinking” (p. 120). This refusal to compromise requires a greater, not lesser, degree of logical clarity. For example, the conflation of intellect and emotion represented in the Nazi motto “Think with the blood!” signals a reversion to pre-rational modes of thought. As Sam Keen has pointed out, the first step of all totalitarian movements is to encourage us to project our shadow onto the face of “the enemy.”

Rosen invites us to bear in mind Ken Wilber's contribution in drawing attention

Serious About MEDITATION?



RELAX!

With Synchronicity Contemporary High-Tech Meditation

To receive a free information package and meditation sampler tape featuring selections of our most popular soundtracks, call 1-800-962-2033, 9 am - 6 pm Eastern Time daily.

<http://www.synchronicity.org>

Meditation Has Never Been So Easy

CTS

An institute of higher learning
that strives to embody spirit,
intellect, and wisdom.



EAST-WEST PSYCHOLOGY M.A. & Ph.D.

Program Engages the historical, cultural, philosophical and spiritual dimensions of psychological theory and practice. Student self-designed concentrations.



PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION M.A. & Ph.D. Program

Brings together the philosophical & religious traditions of both East and West. Concentrations in Buddhist Studies; Chinese Philosophy; Hindu Religion & Philosophy; and **Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness** which addresses the complex relations between philosophy, religion, and science as these converge to shape the world view of a culture.



SOCIAL & CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY M.A. & Ph.D. Program

Explores the social, cultural, historical, philosophical, & spiritual dimensions of anthropological research and practice. Concentrations include Ecology & Social Change; Gender, Sexuality, & Identity; Contemporary Cultural Critique; Cross Cultural Healing.

WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY M.A. Program

An innovative approach to spirituality and culture, focusing on multicultural perspectives. Emphasizes process oriented learning that integrates the cognitive, analytic, creative, experiential, and spiritual.

Accredited by Western Association of Schools & Colleges. Federal loans and scholarships available to qualified students. A number of foreign and minority scholarships are available annually.



California Institute of Integral Studies

9 Peter Yorke Way, Box Q, San Francisco CA 94109
415 / 674-5500

Book reviews

to "the 'pre/trans fallacy,' a widespread tendency among theorists 'to confuse pre-personal [i.e., undifferentiated] and trans-personal [i.e., integrated] dimensions" of consciousness (p. 213). We must also distinguish what is pre-rational (merely irrational) from what is trans-rational. Paradox in this positive sense has a definite trajectory: a movement towards a fully coherent wholeness.

By refusing to yield either side of the paradox that we are at once fully alone and yet fully at one with the universe, we are forced to live what cannot easily be explained, that is, what we are. We must resolve to become a veritable mystery to ourselves.

For Rosen there is no easy guide—no guru-friendly formula—for such enlightenment. The question of personal identity is central. But this is not a symptom of a solipsistic or narcissistic self-preoccupation, for the question of identity cannot be addressed in isolation from questions of our collective human identity. And who, and what, is the "other"? Existential self-inquiry, social self-inquiry, and metaphysical inquiry are mutually irreducible, inseparably related aspects of the whole project.

Rosen is still—and necessarily ever shall be—in the process of working out the radical epistemological, existential, and metaphysical implications of this idea. In his perspicacious critiques of Bohm and Jung and their respective approaches to the problem of wholeness, he offers important hints on the direction in which his investigation must go.

In chapter 14, Rosen notes Bohm's distinction between the implicate order and the holomovement. Whereas the implicate (infinite) order is a stratum of energy, information, or meaning subtly enfolded within our explicate (finite) reality, yet knowable in principle, the holomovement is the "unknown" (and unthinkable) totality as it exists in itself, the unmanifest force behind even the implicate order. Rosen follows David Griffin in regarding the idea of the holomovement as symptomatic of Bohm's occasional "Vedantist mood"; he further asks whether this idea only serves to preserve the very fragmentation of con-

sciousness and reality which Bohm originally set out to question.

At times in my personal exchanges with Bohm, I too have gotten the impression of an ultimate denial of form in favor of that which is formless. For example, he has distinguished symbolic knowing from what he believes to be beyond any form of thought. Bohm has acknowledged that certain forms of symbolizing may usefully call attention to their own limitations and therefore serve as stepping stones, paving the way for transcendence. But in the end, through the acts of inward awareness and deeply reflective attention, which are distinct from mere forms of thought, form is entirely left behind; it dissolves in an "intelligent perception of the infinite totality." As I see it, the nonduality [of subject and object] thus achieved preserves the higher-order dualism of the finite and infinite, the differentiated and undifferentiated, for by granting formless totality such priority over form, form does not merely vanish but remains to express itself negatively in the now unsolvable enigma of why there is form at all. (p. 262)

Rosen's point, I take it, is this: If thought has no essential and internal relationship to intuition or meditation, and language is at best a dispensable means to an end which is entirely apart from language (to know that which is totally unsayable), then we are left with the same scenario rejected by William Irwin Thompson: the purely relative body/mind dropping off in favor of a purely absolute spirit; time, history, individuality, matter, etc. bespeaking a fall into the world; forms (include the forms of thought and imagination) as symptoms of error or evil. The unbridgeable gulf between the symbol and the symbolized as expressed in the idea that language is thoroughly metaphorical and opaque and that nonlinguistic intuition, totally literal and transparent to reality, is undeniably dualistic; hence there must be continuity as well as discontinuity between thought and intuition, between prose and poetry, between symbolic language and the absolute reality to which it refers. The ultimate, in short, cannot be regarded as utterly ineffable (or the symbol as merely symbolic, or the body as a mere vehicle of absolute spirit) if we seek a truly uncompromising wholeness, a thoroughly coherent holism.

Rosen parts company both with those versions of mysticism which finally dismiss

book reviews

language and embodiment and the "merely phenomenal world," as well as with the postmodernist's insistence that language is all, and that objective reality is nothing more than the texts we happen to read (and we can choose to interpret them any way we like). Neither a relativist nor an absolutist, he calls for a transcendence of these polar opposites, and he takes his visionary cue from the Moebius strip and the Klein bottle. For Rosen, these paradoxical forms are more than mere models; for a mere model, like a mere symbol, is apart from the thing modeled or symbolized. Yet how can this unity of symbol and referent be expressed in words?

"If I am seeking wholeness in the fullest meaning of the word," Rosen writes, "it is not enough for me merely to write about it;

wholeness must be embodied in my own way of writing" (p. 269). How does one put one's whole self into the process of inquiry, and what is this "self" thus interjected? These are difficult questions for both Rosen and his readers to grapple with.

This is an exceptionally sophisticated work which requires complete and careful attention. Rosen is a profound thinker who has made an important contribution to contemporary debates.

—JOSEPH M. FELSER, Ph.D.

The reviewer is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the College of Staten Island/City University of New York. His essay, "The New Religious Consciousness," appeared in *The Quest* for Summer 1995 and is being expanded into a book, tentatively scheduled for publication by Quest Books in 1997.



Reviews by Georg Feuerstein

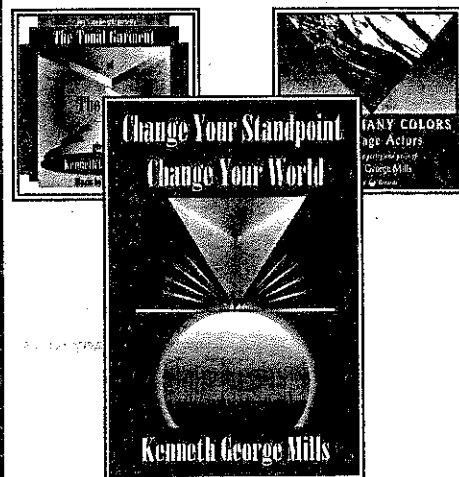
Choosing Reality: A Buddhist View of Physics and the Mind, by Alan Wallace; Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, N.Y., 1996; paper, 232 pages, \$15.95.

Ever since Fritjof Capra's widely read 1975 classic *The Tao of Physics*, adventure-some and philosophical-minded physicists have looked at Eastern schools of thought for a possible framework to explain the outer reaches of modern physics, notably quantum physics. This book is the first effort, by a specialist in religious studies rather than a physicist, to apply the sophisticated philosophical analysis of Madhyamaka Buddhism to modern physics. His starting point is the acknowledgment that "Western civilization has no cognitive science comparable to its physical science." He notes that the objective "black box" approach of psychology fails to comprehend the nature of mind and consciousness at a deeper level, and argues that the Buddhist methods of contemplation offer a more direct access to our cognitive functions.



Readers should not expect a stream of Buddhist terms or an unending series of Tibetan or Sanskrit authorities. In fact, Madhyamaka is not even introduced until chapter sixteen. The first thirteen out of twenty-five chapters provide a competent review of the metaphysical foundations of science, showing, among other things, that faith plays no small role in how science conceptualizes the universe. The discussion revolves around the two principal scientific

NEW FROM SUN-SCAPE



CHANGE YOUR STANDPOINT CHANGE YOUR WORLD

• Selection of lectures (*Unfoldments*[™]) by philosopher Kenneth George Mills from Summer Festivals of Light, Sound and Movement, and Thanksgiving Workshops.

• "If you would like to explore a new way of seeing your eternal self and your relationship to the infinite, then this book will open new doors for you."

— Gordon Davidson, Author, *Spiritual Politics*

264 pages, paper, US\$21.95

THE TONAL GARMENT OF THE WORD

• 19 spontaneous poems by K. G. Mills with musical background by Tim Janis.

• "Riveting improvisations on the fundamentals of divine consciousness."

— John Collinge, *Spirit of Change Magazine*

• "THE LIVING ORAL TRADITION"

CD, US \$14.98, Cass, US \$8.98

COAT OF MANY COLORS

• EarthStage Actors performing poetry and prose of Kenneth George Mills.

• "The audience expected a spiritually uplifting experience. They weren't disappointed."

— Renée Gelpi, Broadcaster & Reviewer

• "THEATRE OF PHILOSOPHY"

• "MODERNDAY SHAKESPEARE"

CD, US \$14.98, Cass, US \$8.98

Watch for LET THE ROBOTS MELT — spontaneous compositions played and orchestrated at the keyboard by Kenneth G. Mills. Soon to be released — full orchestral scores of these compositions!

Sun-Scape Publications

65 High Ridge Road, Ste. 103, Stamford, CT 06905
Tel. & Fax (203) 838-3775

800-437-1454

email: 74601.2021@compuserve.com

WWW: <http://www.sun-scape.com/>

book reviews *Q*

language and embodiment and the "merely phenomenal world," as well as with the postmodernist's insistence that language is all, and that objective reality is nothing more than the texts we happen to read (and we can choose to interpret them any way we like). Neither a relativist nor an absolutist, he calls for a transcendence of these polar opposites, and he takes his visionary cue from the Moebius strip and the Klein bottle. For Rosen, these paradoxical forms are more than mere models; for a mere model, like a mere symbol, is apart from the thing modeled or symbolized. Yet how can this unity of symbol and referent be expressed in words?

"If I am seeking wholeness in the fullest meaning of the word," Rosen writes, "it is not enough for me merely to write about it;

wholeness must be embodied in my own way of writing" (p. 269). How does one put one's whole self into the process of inquiry, and what is this "self" thus interjected? These are difficult questions for both Rosen and his readers to grapple with.

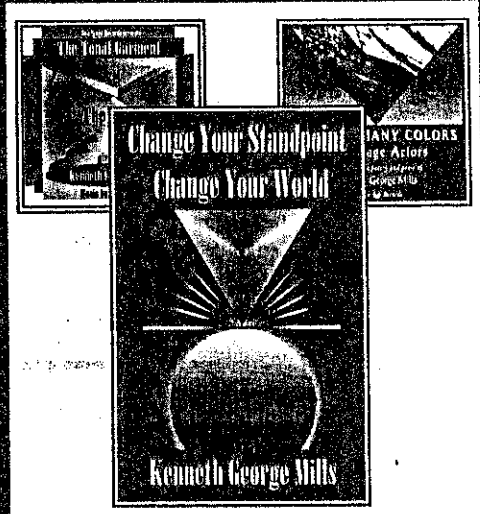
This is an exceptionally sophisticated work which requires complete and careful attention. Rosen is a profound thinker who has made an important contribution to contemporary debates.

—JOSEPH M. FELSER, Ph.D.

The reviewer is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the College of Staten Island/City University of New York. His essay, "The New Religious Consciousness," appeared in *The Quest for Summer 1995* and is being expanded into a book, tentatively scheduled for publication by Quest Books in 1997.



NEW FROM SUN-SCAPE



CHANGE YOUR STANDPOINT CHANGE YOUR WORLD

- Selection of lectures (*Unfoldments*) by philosopher Kenneth George Mills from Summer Festivals of Light, Sound and Movement, and Thanksgiving Wordshops.
 - "If you would like to explore a new way of seeing your eternal self and your relationship to the infinite, then this book will open new doors for you."
— Gordon Davidson, Author, *Spiritual Politics*
- 264 pages, paper, US\$21.95

THE TONAL GARMENT OF THE WORD

- 19 spontaneous poems by K. G. Mills with musical background by Tim Janis.
 - "Riveting improvisations on the fundamentals of divine consciousness."
— John Collinge, *Spirit of Change Magazine*
 - "THE LIVING ORAL TRADITION"
- CD, US \$14.98, Cass, US \$8.98

COAT OF MANY COLORS

- EarthStage Actors performing poetry and prose of Kenneth George Mills.
 - "The audience expected a spiritually uplifting experience. They weren't disappointed."
— Renée Gelpi, Broadcaster & Reviewer
 - "THEATRE OF PHILOSOPHY"
 - "MODERNDAY SHAKESPEARE"
- CD, US \$14.98, Cass, US \$8.98

Watch for LET THE ROBOTS MELT – spontaneous compositions played and orchestrated at the keyboard by Kenneth G. Mills. Soon to be released – full orchestral scores of these compositions!

Sun-Scape Publications

65 High Ridge Road, Ste. 103, Stamford, CT 06905
Tel. & Fax (203) 838-3775
800-437-1454
email: 74601.2021@compuserve.com
WWW: <http://www.sun-scape.com/>