

Book Review

The Atlas of Mind, Body, and Spirit

By Paul Hougham

Copyright 2006, Gaia Books, a division of Octopus Publishing Group Ltd. London
ISBN-13: 978-185675-247-3
ISBN-10: 1-85675-247-x

Reviewed by Michael Greenwood, MD (MB)

A BRIEF SCAN THROUGH THE *ATLAS* reveals a book replete with dynamic pictures and graphics, just like a “real” atlas. To be sure, acupuncture themes are a big feature, but the book is clearly much more than just an acupuncture manual. It has a coffee-table flavor, a sense that it should be found in a physician’s waiting room, inviting the reader to open at random and discover a theme or thought for the day.

The first chapter explores *epistemology*, or *how we know what we know*. The author covers various philosophical themes such as the subjective-objective dichotomy, the non-solidity of matter, the participatory worldview, and how perspectives are dependent on context and culture. There is a short discussion of *Yi Yi Yin Qi*, the Chinese Medicine principle that states that energy follows intention. With such themes in mind, the author points out that modern scientific medicine is addicted to its own particular worldview. As such, it fails to accept its own highest ethic, which is to explore and research what actually happens, rather than try to cram the evidence into ill-fitting sets of assumptions.

From there, the book takes the reader step-by-step into alternate realities originating from widely different cultures. The author begins with the familiar Western scientific anatomical understanding of body structure and function, follows with an exploration of mind and consciousness, and then moves on to holograms, microacupuncture systems, Chakras, and the Kabbalah. There is a comprehensive overview of the acupuncture Meridians, all extensively illustrated with captivating pictures and graphics. He points out how acupuncture can be used to effectively interface differing worldviews and thereby effect change in the mind-body-spirit continuum.

The *Atlas* moves on even further. There is a chapter on the initiation body map of the African Dogon, a tribe with a remarkable understanding of the Sirius star system; and another on the medicine wheels of the North American Natives, which finishes with a reference to an impending planetary transformation predicted by the ancient Mayan calendar.

All-in-all, the author succeeds in what he set out to do. The *Atlas* is an impressive achievement, a testament to the power of transformation and an affirmation that acupuncture cannot be assimilated by reductionism. A quote from the Dogon section says it all:

Go and let yourself be swallowed. Your ancestors will do the rest. Remembering means submitting to your fate. Once you have obeyed, the ancestors will intervene in all the good ways they can. That includes helping you with all the things you cannot know about until you have allowed yourself to be swallowed in the wilderness.

Malidoma Patrice Some

To remain fully relevant in these interesting times, modern medicine, too, must let itself be “swallowed.” Beautifully illustrated and sweeping in scope, *The Atlas of Mind, Body, and Spirit* will certainly find a place in my waiting room.

*Michael T. Greenwood, MD, (MB), BCHIR,FCFP,
CAFCI, FAAMA, FRSA
Victoria Pain Clinic
103-284 Helmcken Road
Victoria, BC, V9B 1T2
Canada*

E-mail: michaelgreenwood@shaw.ca

