

Chaos, Creativity, and Cosmic Consciousness

Rupert Sheldrake Terence McKenna Ralph Abraham

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Imagine a dinner party with the Grateful Dead, Timothy Leary, Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, and the Dalai Lama ... stimulating conversation about the meaning of life, the power of art, and the subtle structures of the universe, a smorgasbord of tastes and talents, a heady concoction of the esoteric, the sublime, and the mundane.

This transcribed colloquy or trilogues of three gifted intellectual theorists, each “a pioneer in new areas of thought,” leaves the reader satiated, satisfied, and intoxicated. The three bring to their colloquies their unique passions and training which, synergistically, catalyze these conversations, creating a heady alchemy of ideas. Using the dialectical method, the authors examine the relationship of the concepts of creativity, chaos, and imagination to “the soul of the world.” Sheldrake “takes the point of view of evolutionary creativity, [Abraham] of chaos, and [McKenna] of imagination.”

Sheldrake, a former director of biochemistry and cell biology at Cambridge University, has authored several books on evolutionary science. Abraham is professor of mathematics at University of California at Santa Cruz. McKenna, who died in 2000, wrote many books about ethno-botany and worked extensively in the field as an ethno-medicine and shamanism researcher. As one would expect of academics who admit that “shooting people down is a favorite sport,” the discussions about “The World Soul and the Mushroom,” “The Resacralization of the World,” and “Education in the New World Order” stimulate one to reconsider one’s staid and conventional assumptions.

“Chaos is not something that degrades information and is somehow the enemy of order, but rather it is something that is the birthplace of order.” This statement describes the book as well as the universe. What often appear to be the chaotic diatribes of idiosyncratic individuals coalesce into a meaningful whole that casts new light on issues that puzzle us all. Merging science and theology, the book plunges the reader “into the imagination, which runs like an endless river through all of us and is driven by the hydraulic momentum of the cataracts of chaos.” Heady stuff, yes, but stimulating, which clearly is the authors’ intention, for these academics call upon us to join them in creating a “new world order” based in cosmic consciousness and an awareness of the evolutionary power of chaos.

One finishes Chaos, Creativity, and Cosmic Consciousness with a sense of heightened awareness and wonder. One may well not understand all one has read-some passages may be too abstruse for the lay reader-however, one puts down the book, pushes back one’s chair, and knows it was a mighty fine dinner.

DUNCAN SPRATTMORAN (March / April 2003)

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