

No specific, genus-and-difference definition of experience is given. If it were, one would instantly see a major difficulty, because Griffin “solves” the mind-body problem by stretching the concept of experience so thin as to make it virtually meaningless. He twice suggests, for example, that amoebas have experiences. Experience is unobservable. Thus, the author says that nobody can show that amoebas and the like do not have it. Such roundabout evidence as we have, however, indicates that a nervous system is necessary for experience, and amoebas do not have nervous systems. While it cannot be proved that they do not have experience, surely the burden of proof rests with anyone who asserts that they do.

No reasonable person could deny Professor Griffin's knowledge of philosophy, his scholarship, and presumed desire to solve a perennial problem, but his treatment does fall short of the ideal. For example, he never mentions Aristotle's ‘hylomorphism,’ although traditionally it has been one of the basic “solutions” to the mind-body relationship. It strikes this reviewer that hylomorphism achieves the balance between strict monism and absolute dualism that Griffin seems to be looking for. Occasionally, he introduces seemingly arbitrary assumptions, as when he refers to a “principle of continuity,” which is his way of saying that qualitative differences are illusory. What principle of continuity? Now and then, he accuses his intellectual opponents of his own besetting sins, such as using “weasel words” and bringing in dubious assumptions. He does not neglect a dismissive reference to book reviewers, either.

Serious students of the mind-body problem should read and ponder this book, because it is thoughtful, well-researched, and somewhat original. They should be aware, however, that Griffin wins his battle basically by setting up criteria that only his own theory can meet and by construing “experience” in a very broad, almost content-less way.

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**The Healing Mind: Your Guide to the Power of Meditation, Prayer, and Reflection** by Eileen F. Oster. Rocklin, CA: Prima Publishing, 1996, 182 pp., \$14.00 (p). ISBN 0-7615-0488-5.

*The Healing Mind* is meant to be a guide to self-healing, recovery, and spiritual exploration. It is a book that tries to show how a union with the “Divine Spirit” may be gained through meditation, self-examination, and prayer. While it does discuss a wide variety of topics and philosophies, attempting to

combine the essences of each into a spiritual path, it was found wanting in several ways.

The book covers a moderate range of topics including the author's view on the purpose of life, meditation, self-examination, prayer, energy practices, healing, dreams, visions, and the life cycle. The book is written for someone who is at a starting point in their search for knowledge of spirituality, and tends to assume that the reader has a rather immediate need of such knowledge. It is not difficult reading; about one-third of the book consists of anecdotes.

Right from the beginning, the book shows the author's spiritual viewpoint, which is a combination of Eastern and Western spirituality. In covering meditation, the author discusses the effect of the Chinese concept of *qi* on the health of the individual as well as explaining how it interacts with the *chakra* system. She discusses how disruptions in the *chakras* may affect our psychological and physiological health. Several meditation exercises are also given to acquaint the reader with these energies. In discussing prayer, the author posits a very Western view of God in respect to the relationship of the individual to God.

The concept of self-examination is a major focus of the book and is presented as something which "is necessary to fulfill life's purpose, which is to evolve the soul and consciousness" (p. 36). Curiously, the author, an occupational therapist, suggests choosing a psychiatrist to accomplish this important task, believing that "you may find a mentor or friend who can serve in this capacity, but often the relationship can be convoluted by other issues that may hamper your self-examination" (p. 39). Furthermore, the author states, "At its loftiest, psychotherapy offers the modern version of the communal wise person who lives what he teaches and teaches others the same" (p. 40). This is a rather surprising position to take, especially because it contradicts most of the esoteric philosophies she is trying to explain to the reader.

A full one-third of the book is devoted to anecdotes of the author's experience as a healer, citing case after case of where a patient recovered fully with the help of her energy work. Unfortunately, the author makes no mention of whether or not there might be any kind of a placebo effect occurring in these cases and mentions no corroborating research to support her claims.

In fact, the bibliography contains only two references, which is reflected in the depth of the author's discussions. The author combines the Chinese concept of *qi* with the Indian concept of *chakras* quite often, evidently not fully understanding the philosophic origins and differences between the two concepts. The meditation information is good on a technical level, but it is apparent that the author has not done sufficient research on the subject of Eastern methodologies, even the relatively simple Buddhist techniques.

But there are some good aspects to this book. The section on alternative medicine is quite good in giving definitions of various kinds of treatments and suggestions about when alternative medicine techniques may be more effec-

tive than their allopathic counterparts. The author does a reasonable job at presenting certain philosophical concepts, such as the *chakra* system and methods to attain stillness of mind, but the amount of useful information is overwhelmed by the author's style of painting subtle philosophies with an excessively broad brush.

In conclusion, anyone who has been to the New Age section of a bookstore has seen shelf after shelf of books that aim to be of the self-help variety, or, at least try to make people feel good about themselves. The book is competent in this regard, but does not include much in the way of information that cannot be found in dozens of other books of the same genre.

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**Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography** by Roger Shattuck. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1996, 369 pp., \$14.00, (p). ISBN 0-15-600551-4.

Is more necessarily better? That, in the simplest terms possible, is the theme that Roger Shattuck explores in this book. Shattuck is a University Professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Boston University and winner of the National Book Award for Marcel Proust. Writing in a lucid, learned, and dense style, he approaches the delicate subject of setting limits in modern society, specifically in relation to the vastly different domains of scientific research and pornography.

This book contains a careful, balanced, and detailed presentation of many scientific and literary themes. In a brief review, I can only give the barest sketch of some of the issues and ideas he discusses. Such controversial and difficult concepts deserve the extensive attention that Shattuck gives; there is little that I consider extraneous in this intricately woven book. He writes gracefully, and extremely well; in places his writing is as thick and rich as a slice of cake from an elegant bakery.

Shattuck does not footnote, although he often does cite sources in the text; he also offers an extensive bibliography. Likewise, there is a decent index and a detailed Table of Contents. While having read many of the literary works Shattuck discusses would enrich a reader's experience of the book, it is certainly not necessary to its understanding or appreciation. Beginning in his home arena of literature, Shattuck uses the five chapters of Part One, entitled "Literary Narratives," to artfully examine many of the stories that have shaped our modern approaches to knowledge, freedom and restraint: Prometheus's theft of fire (read "technology" or "knowledge") from Zeus which saved mankind but was followed by Zeus's retaliatory gift of Pandora;