

psychology (e.g., Freud, James, Janet), but which this discipline, under the later dominance of behaviorism, had neglected for too long.

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**Maya: The World as Virtual Reality** by Richard L. Thompson. Alachua, FL: Govardhan Hill Publishing, 2003. 304 pp. \$15.95 (paper). ISBN 0-963-530-909.

*Maya* is a text that explores several concepts and ideas related to the recent *Matrix* movies and the notion of how to present a virtual world that would mimic our day to day experiences. The book starts off with a good history of virtual reality projects from their beginnings as a 1960's military project to present day uses and then jumps off to discuss basic computer theory such as the Turing Machine and how it is related to the author's thesis. From there he discusses the notion of *Matrix* style "brain in a vat" experiments and how such a thing would be possible considering the theoretical limits of computing and human anatomy. Thompson posits the idea of "what if physical reality as we know it is virtual?"

The author then discusses various physical and mathematical phenomena, such as chaos theory, quantum mechanics, and relativity theory, and how such concepts could be integrated into his theory of experience as virtual reality. His descriptions of the applicable physical phenomenon were good, especially those pertaining to quantum mechanics and how the notion of the Many Worlds interpretation could be used to demonstrate how a Virtual Reality system could shunt an individual from world to world based on those choices made. Thompson is obviously well read and is quite open about discussing ideas from such authors as Tipler, Dyson, and Kurzweil and how they might apply to his premise. But there were some shortcomings, usually where he takes a good idea and goes on a bit of a tangent, such as "Physicists have taken it as a matter of faith that all of the molecules in nature move according to their equations, and in this sense, physics can be viewed as a branch of theology" (p. 32) and the unfortunately oft used example of using the requirement of quantum mechanics to have an observer to assert that "The standard Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics seems to bring mind and consciousness into physics" (p. 71).

The next major section discusses parapsychology and how it might relate to the author's theory of virtual reality. Some of the concepts he covers are PEAR's micro-PK experiments, remote viewing, Pribram's hologram theory, hallucination, reincarnation, poltergeists, healing, and auras. This section was quite good in explaining the relevant research in these areas and providing a lot of jump off points for further study. But the author spends more time explaining these phenomena than tying it to the premise of the book. He tended to bring up every unexplained phenomena under the sun and rather than showing how his VR theory explains the underpinnings, merely shows how they don't contradict his theory. Perhaps the best part is where Thompson proposes the concept of "a universe built for us" based on universal constants and the necessity that they be what they are for the existence of the universe as we know it.

Towards the end he touches on Eastern philosophies and how some of these concepts may apply to his notion of virtual reality, specifically the notion of a universal consciousness as the source of the virtual reality system. This section had the most potential to be of interest, especially considering that the concept of Maya is so pivotal in Hinduism and Buddhism. But rather than give a general description of these concepts as he did in previous sections he dives right in, presenting rather deep descriptions of the Vaishnava school of Hinduism and Tibetan school of Buddhism, to the point where the average reader may have a difficult time keeping up.

In conclusion, this book takes the concept of Maya and virtual reality and discusses how it may apply to a wide range of ideas, both physically, parapsychically, and philosophically. It is also well footnoted with a lot of opportunity to explore these concepts further. And although it is informative this reviewer believes it's important to not take it too seriously from an academic viewpoint. If you liked the *Matrix* movies and are interested in exploring those ideas of virtual reality as reality in the context of the present day, then this would be a good book for you.

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**Faith, Science, and Understanding** by John Polkinghorne. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000. xvi + 208 pp. \$19.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-3000-9128-1. \$11.95 (paper) ISBN 0-3000-8372-6.

The relation of science to religion raises the same deep questions as the attempt to find, in our current scientific understanding of Nature, room for psychic phenomena. If the success of science is interpreted in reductive