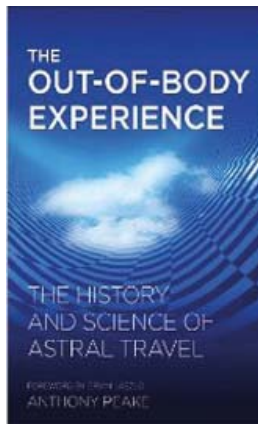


Further Books of Note

The Out-of-Body Experience: The History and Science of Astral Travel by Anthony Peake. Watkins, 2011. 240 pp. \$14.95. ISBN 9781780280219.



In *The Out-of-Body Experience*, Anthony Peake provides a history of astral travel with a focus on Bob Monroe's documented experiences. He includes remote viewing, near-death experiences, lucid dreaming, and other psychic phenomenon as closely related to the classic OBE (out-of-body experience). Most fascinating is Peake's theory on how to explain astral travel scientifically. He considers several models of physics combined with more recent studies in consciousness and neuroscience to extrapolate an intriguing look at how our perceptions merge with so-called reality.

SKIP ATWATER

The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion by Jonathan Haidt. Pantheon, 2012. 419 pp. \$28.95 (hardcover). ISBN 9780307377906.

This book has had much favorable publicity, including author interviews on radio and TV. Those snippets indicated that anomalists might derive useful understanding from the book, seeing as we're divided from mainstream science by something like ingrained ideologies. But I found the book immensely disappointing, for after 300+ pages, the conclusions amount to this:

- We are heavily influenced by gut feelings—hardly a revelation; I was nurtured intellectually on Freud's scenario of interactions between id, ego, and superego, and the general idea of conscious and unconscious or subconscious minds.



- People of different backgrounds or cultures tend to differ on many issues.
- We tend to regard those who differ with us as being not only wrong but even immoral.
- People who have established points of meaningful commonality are better able to discuss other matters agreeably.

I don't know how long ago it was that I reached those conclusions without wading through a textbook that charts in considerable detail the development of the field of moral psychology and the author's own participation in it, which is what this book is. The academic slant, which includes abstraction and a tendency to over-

generalize, is illustrated for example by:

the human mind is designed to 'do' morality. (p. xii)

an obsession with righteousness (leading inevitably to self-righteousness)

is the normal human condition. (p. xiii)

human beings—but no other animals—. . . produce large cooperative groups, tribes, and nations without the glue of kinship. (p. xiii)

I seem to have read about, and seen documentaries of, cooperative behavior among large groups of ants, bees, fish, wolves, chimpanzees. . . .

Haidt admits at the outset that his conclusions are nothing new:

I'll draw on the latest research in neuroscience, genetics, social psychology, and evolutionary modeling, but the take-home message . . . is ancient. (p. xvi)

So people interested in those intellectual fields will undoubtedly find much of use in the book, and it is written quite accessibly, albeit in didactic style ("I will show . . ." and the like).

I seem to be in a very small unappreciative minority. There are about 80 rave reviews on amazon.com and only a few that express something like my rather negative reaction. Potential readers should sample those reviews as well as this one before deciding whether or not they want to read the book themselves.

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