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About the Authors

June Boyce-Tillman is Professor of Applied Music at University College Winchester. She pioneered work in introducing composing activities into the classroom and has a particular interest in Music and Theology including Religious Education. She regularly writes and takes workshops linking these areas together. She has done pioneering work in interfaith dialogue, writing articles and speaking on interfaith and intercultural links in Britain and abroad. Her most recent publications are in the areas of music, healing and spirituality and the medieval abbess, Hildegard of Bingen.

John Holt was a lecturer in the School of Fine Art, Art History and Cultural Analysis at Leeds University and then Fellow in Art and Design at Loughborough University. An artist and cultural activist, he has written, from practical experience, on Native American and Aboriginal culture, the arts of South Asia and the status of those defined as 'mentally ill'. His work on the possibility of transformation through creativity led to him founding AIM (Artists in Mind), a charitable organisation set up to promote and explore creativity in those in emotional and spiritual crisis.

Jennifer Elam is a licensed psychologist who has taught at the college level, worked in residential treatment, and worked in schools with students aged preschool through adult. As a Cadbury scholar at Pendle Hill she listened to many people's stories of their experiences of God and recorded about one hundred of them, many of which came to influence the paintings that she was creating. She presently leads art retreats, facilitates programs at the Listening Center in Springfield, Pennsylvania, works as a psychologist, and makes time to write and paint. Her heart's desire now is to enjoy ordinary life.

Douglas Watt has been a clinical neuropsychologist for roughly 18 years after graduating from Boston College and Harvard University for his PhD and BA. He has directed Psychology and Neuropsychology departments in two teaching hospitals in the Boston area and is

currently Instructor in Neuropsychology, Boston University School of Medicine. He has had a passionate long-term interest in virtually any and all perspectives on emotion, and believes that only through interdisciplinary work that any real progress will be made in clarifying the deep mandates of emotion as part of our evolutionary heritage.

Isabel Clarke is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist, currently working for the Hampshire Partnership NHS Trust, providing a psychological therapies service for an inpatient psychiatric hospital near Southampton. She is a lifelong practising Anglican, and active in the Association for Creation Spirituality (Greenspirit). She has published and given workshops and lectures on the interface between psychosis and spirituality since 1999, including the edited book *Psychosis and Spirituality: Exploring the New Frontier* (Whurr, 2001).

Lyn D Andrews is a secondary school science and biology teacher who became aware of an inner calling to start writing fiction in 1994. This led to a renewed interest in the relationship between science and religion, culminating in a life-changing mystical experience in 1996. Since then she has concentrated her efforts in gaining scientific support for an interconnected, creative view of the universe. She believes passionately that increasing self-awareness and self-acceptance leads to a more enriched and fulfilling life and that ultimate co-creative power resides within us. She is currently in the process of establishing a new approach to education and healing called Eduspirit.

Jorge N Ferrer is Associate Professor at the California Institute of Integral Studies, San Francisco, and Adjunct Faculty at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto. Formerly a fellow of 'La Caixa' Foundation, a research fellow of the Catalonian Council, and an ERASMUS scholar at the University of Wales (United Kingdom), his writing includes *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (SUNY Press, 2002). In 2000, he received the Presidential Award from the Fetzer Institute for his seminal work on consciousness studies.

Rodney Bomford studied Mathematics at Oxford and subsequently theology at Oxford, the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, and Union Seminary, New York, specialising in Philosophy of Religion. He was ordained in the Church of England and from 1977 to 2001 was Vicar of St Giles' church, Camberwell. He was a founding member of the London Bi-logic group which for nearly 20 years has pursued the thinking of the psycho-analyst Ignacio Matte Blanco and is now part of an international network. In his book *The Symmetry of God* (1999) he explored

the connections between God and the Unconscious in the light of Matte Blanco's theories.

Chris Clarke was Professor of Applied Mathematics and Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics at the University of Southampton, where he is now a Visiting Professor. He has published three books on General Relativity and papers on relativity, astrophysics, cosmology, the foundations of quantum theory, biomagnetic imaging, the physics of consciousness and ecotheology.

Neil Douglas-Klotz is co-chair of the Mysticism Group of the American Academy of Religion and directs the Edinburgh Institute for Advanced Learning in Edinburgh, Scotland. He is an independent scholar of religious studies, spirituality, and psychology, and author of many books in this area including *Prayers of the Cosmos* (1990), *Desert Wisdom* (1995) and *The Sufi Book of Life* (2005). He holds a PhD in religious studies and psychology from Union Institute University and taught these subjects for ten years at Holy Names College in California. He has followed the practices of the Sufi path since 1976 and was recognized as a senior teacher (murshid) in this tradition in 1993.

David Abram, cultural ecologist and philosopher, is the author of *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* (Vintage, 1997), for which he received, among other awards, the Lannan Literary Award for Nonfiction. He has lived with indigenous sorcerers in Indonesia, Nepal, and the Americas, and his writings have appeared in academic and other journals. He has also been named by The Utne Reader as one of a hundred leading visionaries currently transforming the world.

Anne Primavesi is a Fellow of the Centre for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion, Birkbeck, London, and of the Westar Institute for the Advancement of Religious Literacy, Santa Rosa, California. Formerly Research Fellow in Environmental Theology, University of Bristol, her publications on theology and science include most recently *Gaia's Gift: Earth, Ourselves and God after Copernicus* (Routledge, 2003).

Chris Clarke

Introduction

What does it mean, to *know*? Consider these quotations ...

My mother would get up early. She would go outside and stand there a long time. Then she would say, 'Vehsih yehno nah ha ooh.' That means, 'The caribou are just under the mountains over there, and they're coming.' Everyone would get excited. (Norma Kassi)¹

Not only do we know more about the universe, but our understanding is deeper, and the questions that we are asking are more profound. Still, our understanding of the origin and evolution of the universe has not yet caught up with what we know about it. (Wendy L Freedman)²

Then in the distance I began to see ... the physical cosmos and the underlying constitutive forces that built the universe and sustain it. ... I learned by becoming what I was knowing. I discovered the universe not by knowing it from the outside but by tuning to that level in my being where I was that thing. (Chris Bache)³

The sapiential perspective envisages the role of knowledge as the means of deliverance and freedom, of what the Hindu calls moksa. To know is to be delivered. (Seyyed Hossein Nasr)⁴

These are about very remarkable, and very different, ways of knowing. They seem to go beyond the knowing of our more ordinary life, which is concerned with familiarity with people and places, the ingrained ability to perform various tasks, or our accumulated learning about the consequences of our actions. The wisdom of Norma Kassi's mother, an elder of Gwich'in Nation, of Yukon, is intensely practical and born of a lifetime of living close to nature. The knowledge of the cosmologist Wendy Freedman is derived from measurements from satellite observatories orbiting the earth, coupled with the full intellectual apparatus of modern theoretical physics; it is vast but seemingly remote from our lives. The vision of Chris Bache, seen in the trance of a

[1] Kassi (1996), p. 75.

[2] Freedman (2003).

[3] Bache (2000).

[4] Nasr (1989), p. 309; quoted in Ferrer (2002), p. 127.

psychedelic state of consciousness, claims to deliver similar cosmological information, but through direct awareness with no instrument other than the body–mind. And the knowledge dealt with by Sayed Hussein Nasr, knowledge of the ultimate nature of all existence, is attained through the long refinement of consciousness taught in traditional meditative spiritual paths.

Is it right to call all these ‘knowing’, as if it were a question of a single human activity applied to different areas; or are they so different that it is misleading to use the same word for all of them? Do they fundamentally differ from the more pedestrian knowings of everyday life, or is it more a matter of degree? What do we mean when we assess the particular claims of each as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’?

For over a thousand years, and in many cultures, attempts have been made to answer these questions by appeal to a hierarchy of ways of knowing — an ascending chain of types of knowledge, each superior to the one below. At different times, science or religion have each claimed the pinnacle of knowing, the knowing at the top of hierarchy in terms of which everything else, whether theoretical or practical, could be derived. A famous modern example of this on the scientific side is Francis Crick’s *Astonishing Hypothesis* that the whole of life and mind can be explained in terms of biochemistry and the interactions of neurons. An alternative claimant on the spiritual side might be Ken Wilber whose collection of writings⁵ gives a pinnacle place to the sort of spiritual knowing being described by Nasr. Both these examples have come in for trenchant criticism, as well as enthusiastic praise. In the light of the new discoveries surveyed in this book, it now seems necessary to explore ways of knowing in which there is no boss-knowledge, no supreme ruler at the pinnacle.

Our aim in this book, therefore, is to consider the possibility that many ways of knowing need to be recognised alongside each other, without a hierarchical structure of superiority one to another, to examine different ways in which this can be so, and explore the consequences of this for how we might live our lives. There is a need to proceed both boldly and skilfully. Within systems that have an order of superiority between knowings there is a vital distinction between those where the higher ways negate and replace the lower, and those where the higher ways incorporate and then go beyond the lower; a distinction between the malevolent strict hierarchies and the benevolent *holarchies*, as Wilber terms his own system of levels that incorporate the lower ones. Boldness is needed in order to expose the injustices that have been perpetrated by the dogmatic wielding of hierarchical power. Skill is

[5] E.g. *Sex, Ecology, and Spirituality* (1995).

needed to understand the gradations of benign and malevolent versions, and be always alert to the tendencies of benignly inclusive schemes to slide over into the camp of their authoritarian hierarchical cousins.

The chapters that follow are grouped into sections which cover the different aspects of a new vision of our knowing. In keeping with the spirit of alternative ways, academic analysis and story-telling will be found side by side. Each section begins with a brief introduction in which I describe its place in the overall development of the argument of the book.

First, the **social context** will be examined, revealing the forces that have shaped the restricted way of knowing that has become 'normal' in the West, and the damage that has thereby been done to individuals, to society, and indeed to the planet. June Boyce-Tillman, whose study of music in society has led her to an analysis of the nature of society itself, categorises the ways of knowing that have been subjugated. This is followed by two chapters whose authors have worked closely with people who have often been repressed because of their way of knowing. Both identify the experiences involved as *mystical*, though they usually lie outside established religious systems (these are considered later). John Holt describes this from his experience of the role of Art in bringing about self realisation in those who have been confined to penal mental institutions. Then Jennifer Elam presents a panorama of the variety of different spontaneous experiences, continuing John Holt's account with a focus on the way in which society, through its narrow commercially driven definition of 'normal' has labelled these experiences as pathological.

The approach of science is then entered through **the perspective of psychology**, again with two complementary accounts. Douglas Watt presents the viewpoint of neuropsychiatry, giving a powerful plea for the rebuilding of the moral framework that has been eroded by the narrowness of both conventional religion and conventional scientism. Isabel Clarke then describes a cognitive approach that roots the dysfunctions of self and society, described previous chapters, in the fundamental nature of the human being, and develops a conception of knowing that is based on the divided nature of the knower, ourselves.

The next section, on **physics, logic and the pluralistic universe**, surveys the fundamental change in our world view that arises if we accept the validity of alternative ways of knowing. If we are to bring mystical and subjugated ways alongside the scientific way of knowing, then we have to make a fundamental revision in the philosophical assumption that has so underpinned science, namely *realism*: the view that the world is simply 'there', outside us, waiting to be passively observed by

us (or minor variations of this). Until recently there has been no alternative to realism that has done justice to the actual nature of science. Now, however, the development of *participatory philosophies* enable us to go beyond realism. In this section, Jorge Ferrer presents his definitive version of a participatory conception of the world that affirms the fundamental place of the Mystery at the core of our experience and at the same time makes sense of the multiplicity of shores on the ocean of this mystery. I see this as the first world view that genuinely acknowledges the experiences of the different mystical traditions and of science. Then Lyn Andrews gives a detailed account of her own spontaneous mystical experience, which describes a process of progressive transformation of life and of progressive growth in understanding following an initial revelation, leading to a remarkable vision of our place in the cosmos.

Adopting this view requires us, however, to alter the basic logical structures of our thinking. This is described first by Rodney Bomford, who demonstrates the power of an enlarged system of logic that unites mystical experience with the data of psychoanalytic research. Then we move to physical science in a chapter where I show how this new logic is further extended by modern physics. I also discuss here the limits that this implies to the scope of conventional science within this larger framework. Together these chapters provide the radical conceptual and intellectual structure that is needed for the new world view and the new science emerging from the previous sections.

Mysticism is not about feelings or concepts, it is about living. And so the final section examines **the nature of the spiritual path** as it is displayed by all we have learnt. Drawing on Middle Eastern mysticism, Neil Douglas-Klotz expounds a mysticism of ordinary life – but seen in an extra-ordinary way. Next David Abram returns us to the ground of all our experience and all our living: the recovery of our intimate relationship with the planet and all its beings, human and other than human. Finally this central role of the planet is named by Anne Primavesi as Ecology, in a chapter that sets out a path that integrates science and theistic religion within an ecologically based spiritual path involving multiple ways of knowing.

I close the book with a brief reflection on the relevance of this inclusive vision to our struggling species.