

Book Reviews

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**1 The beginning of Infinity: Explanations That Transform the World
by: Daniel Deutsch
Published 2011
by Penguin Random House
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 2SA, UK, 496pp
ISBN-10: 978-0-7139-9274-8**

The scientific community has seldom had a representative like Daniel Deutsch to make the connections between philosophy, science and human progress as amenable to the broader public. This is demonstrated in his book and best seller *Beginning of Infinity: Explanations That Transform the World*.

Although being bold and ambitious in his undertaking, courageous in argumentation but simple and witty in language, Daniel Deutsch takes the reader on a fascinating journey through the major human transformations of the last two centuries, tracing the developments back to the emergence of the scientific process and the European Enlightenment era. He contends that the scientific process of knowledge generation, how we reach good explanations and drop bad ones, has the potential to take us beyond finiteness, beyond the boundaries and horizons humanity is encountering in our present world.

From an ontological perspective, to Deutsch there exists a real universe, which is governed by laws of physics. Concurrently, he is not a reductionist, but argues that all abstractions, such as knowledge itself, are real. The obtainment of knowledge, however, has to be complemented by the principle of fallibilism – there is not absolute knowledge or ‘natural’, god-made laws, but only bold, human-made conjectures. Acknowledging that all knowledge can potentially be proven wrong or inaccurate leaves us in an ever more understood, but never completely knowable reality. In line with Popper, Deutsch therefore refutes empiricism and argues that there is no mere observation, but rather that all sensory experience is theory-laden. Completing his philosophical foundation, he rejects the principle of inductivism, that the future resembles the past, and posits that it was the European enlightenment, the culture of criticism and refinement of ideas, that allowed progress to occur.

Equipped with the tools of scientific knowledge generation, the insatiable thirst for knowledge can be translated into actual progress. The source of this potential infinity is the human quest for knowledge and the principal difference between nature and humans is the ability to store information, to transport, transform and apply this ever-growing treasure. The application of that knowledge to unknown circumstances and problems is what enables us to come up with new concepts and solutions for problems that did not even exist a few years back, making humans the universal problem solving apparatus. It

is exactly this universality, in the process of inquiry, understanding and subsequent realisation of change, that leads the author to argue that human development is not per se limited or contained to a space or domain, such as our planet earth, but may infinitely extend into the future and beyond limitations.

In Kuhnian terms, we are merely scratching the surface of our potential and are at the brink of a revolution of sciences rather than just filling in the last missing pieces of the puzzle of knowledge. Having set the scene to reach for infinity, Deutsch takes the reader on a rollercoaster through the evolution of culture, creativity, political philosophy and quantum mechanics, ultimately pleading for curiosity and to embrace the unforeseeable, as everything that is stable and unchangeable will be soon dead.

Although the reader might disagree with a few points raised, Deutsch is able to expand the worldview of the reader, providing a fresh perspective on things, countering the often-pessimistic tone of current assessments of the state of humanity. Overall, 'The beginning of infinity' is definitely a memorable read, and although we cannot know to what degree Deutsch's clearly proven explanatory skills extend into the realm of prophetic or predictional capabilities – the not so distant future will tell.

2 Metrics of Human Consciousness

by: Richard Barrett

Published 2015

by Lulu Publishing Services

3101 Hillsborough Street, Raleigh, NC 27607, USA, 76pp

ISBN-10: 1291987967

In the *Metrics of Human Consciousness* by Richard Barrett offers the reader an interesting theory and method of how to measure human consciousness. As one of the thought leaders on values and leadership, Barrett distils his research in this book, guiding the reader through the ambiguous topic of how to measure consciousness.

Starting from the hypothesis that different values and behaviours can be associated with different levels of consciousness, Barrett expands Maslow's hierarchy of needs by integrating elements of Verdi's philosophy soul-consciousness to formulate the book's central model – Barrett's seven levels of consciousness.

Relabeling Maslow's needs and differentiating between three self-actualisation levels, Barrett argues that every individual passes through different stages of development, firstly, 'deficiency'-based levels such as surviving, conforming and differentiating and secondly, 'growth'-based needs such as individuating, integrating and serving. Drawing on concepts of neurology, spirituality and biology, Barrett develops his conceptualisation of consciousness as to support the stability of an individual or group in lieu of a changing environment. According to Barrett, an individual progress from one level to another through *ego-soul dynamics*, the intertwined motivations of the soul over the ego and vice versa, a process he calls liberating the soul.

Barrett's book is a good attempt to approach the hard to grapple topic of human consciousness and to quantify an intrinsically qualitative experience. He formulates his ideas in an accessible language, providing illustrative examples and summaries. Due to the nature of the topic, the book seldom exhibits the depth of discussion and critical

reflection as a scholarly reader might await, with little references to other seminal authors on values, consciousness or leadership.

It can definitely be useful for leadership and human resource to sensitise professionals and serve as a basis for further development. His cultural transformation tool functions as an audit tool to assess the values of leaders, organisations or even nations and to subsequently inform change and development processes. Although the issue of (human) consciousness will for long remain ambiguous and opaque, the book is step to bring discussions around organisational consciousness to the forefront and make the development of consciousness conscious.