

**MICHEL WEBER, *Ethnopsychiatrie et syntonie. Contexte philosophique et applications cliniques* [*Ethnopsychiatry and Syntony: Philosophical Context and Clinical Applications*] La-Neuville-aux-Joûtes, France: Jacques Flament, 2015: 123 pages. [Reviewed by PHILIPPE GAGNON, College of Adult and Professional Studies, Bethel University, Saint Paul, MN 55112. Email: <pmg82224@bethel.edu>]**

Michel Weber's monograph titled *Ethnopsychiatry and Syntony* is short, slightly more than a hundred pages, but it covers a great deal of ground in its three chapters, its conclusion, and two one-page appendices consisting of diagrams of the "I / Self" according to Ronald Laing. The first chapter is on the premises, in other words, the cultural conditions, that allowed for the unification or "agencement" (agency) that is represented by ethnopsychiatry, also sometimes referred to as transcultural psychology. The second chapter is a useful construal of several different assumptions behind the techno-scientific project and its relation to monotheism that are not often visited, and the third chapter is on clinical applications—which covers the application part of the subtitle—and situates us in relation to, most significantly, Georges Devereux, Laing, and Eugène Minkowski.

In the first chapter, Weber covers some of the history of psychiatry, reminding us of localization theory, which came from neuropsychology. Localization theory was based on early attempts of psychophysicists, who had opposed themselves to Kant, for whom psychology was not a science with empirical import that would measure anything. Here, Weber mentions (and revisits later) the collision that took place between the school of Nancy, for which hypnotic states were considered beneficial, and the school of La Salpêtrière, for which hypnotic states were an indication of neuronal pathology. Henri Bergson, Charles Myers, and William James can be situated in terms of the latter school.

Weber's project is less to build his own version of ethnopsychiatry than to try to think the relationship of psychology and ethnology through the notion of "agencement" (22, also see 5, 33). We are also informed of the other major notion, that of syntony, an ecotherapeutical notion that evokes the power of magic related to speech, to the rhythm of the life of the first peoples, whereas civilized people situate themselves in a space-time that is spectacular but mechanical and indifferent. The idea of "agencement" is put in relation to the notion of creativity in the sense of Whitehead, where the many become one and see their sum-total augmented

by one, by a togetherness. This is also an occasion to insist on the fact that the point of departure of this inquiry is the radical empiricism of James and Whitehead, for which the multifarious diversity of experience is always the primary awakening factor and the ulterior reference.

This first chapter ends with a distinction between the modern and premodern in order to help situate the book's stance in relation to the postmodern. It introduces the ideas of *cosmos*, *mundus*, and *universus*. We find that the *cosmos* was an organic whole lasting as a fundamental datum of experience. It was autonomous and did not need any extrinsic evidence to give us a sense of the connectedness of all existence. The *mundus* kept something of this originary organicity, but it was not ultimate anymore, it was mediated or given by a creator God, whether it be the Jewish, Christian, or Muslim God. The modern world came to be through some "openings," one of which was *spatial*, with the cosmological upheaval that followed the Copernican revolution. Weber insists here on the enclosures, on the reconfiguration of communal property, trying to map the passage for the peasant from autonomy to dependency on the market. Another opening was the *worldly horizon* that was sent further away by Christopher Columbus, when the Judeo-Christian narrative of creation had to integrate the novelty of the question of a *plurality of worlds*. There followed a second Renaissance, which affirmed a utopian immanentism and naturalism in philosophy, with the pantheisms of Spinoza and Toland, for example, until this was itself countered by Descartes, Gassendi, and others. We get in the end a vision of the postmodern world as the product of two of these openings.

It is with chapter two that we delve into the meaning of these two openings, with re-emphasis on this "agencement" between the culture of the *mundus*, an organism divinely created which remains opaque to science, and culture invoking a *universus* in its use of a mechanical monotheistic rationally organized universe. This chapter also traces the transition to a *multiversus*, which refers to a *chaosmos* that is not divinely created nor scientifically transparent. For Weber, what finally erupted was a new consciousness that the real question was not the impersonal and entirely immanent divinity of pantheism, nor that of a personal God, but of the transformation of the "I-thou" of monotheism into a horizon of "I-us-her" which comes from gnostic communitarianism. Weber himself characterizes this gnostic communitarianism otherwise in a later reference, and one could, in light of the same evidence, argue for the opposite. Indeed, many

a reader will wonder what has come here of the high-strung solitude more often associated with gnostic imagination.

An important distinction is introduced between two types of scientific explanation, namely, *exo-science*, which aims at a mastery of the world around us, the exterior world, and *endo-science*, a knowledge of the mental and of levels of consciousness (37f.). Techno-scientific rationality transforms all processes into artificial ones, into processes that are both controlled and tarified. It is a science of extension. There were two generalizing motions that played heavily in this transformation of our vision into a “mechanicized” cosmos, the *dualistic* occidental one, which allowed one to bracket the mental and the intensive so as to develop scientific extension. Oriental and Southern wisdoms have posited a *monism* which affirms complementarity between physical and mental aspects, which could give rise together to a holistic view of experience and human psychology.

Weber also deplores a rationalization of religiousness that is detrimental to religious experience in its communitarian and personal aspects. It is not clear that this notion would be Whitehead’s (39), since the progress of religious consciousness, instead of going toward rationalization and solitude, as Whitehead affirmed in 1926, would go toward some frenetic trance. Weber indeed cites shamans and possession. He furthers his point by noting the semantic misadventures of the word *daimon*, which, being a symbol for the transcendence to the self, became the danger of being led astray by a demon. Weber refers to the consumption of tea as unleashing mental creativity (42), so as to point out that in fact it is Chinese civilization that was the first to advance *exo-science*; he says that this techno-scientific rationality would therefore not be culturally related to the existence of a creator God. He furthers this point by seeing a historical correlation between monotheism, patriarchal imperialism, military Keynesianism, techno-scientific capitalism, and schizophrenia. This criticism of the patriarchal character of the Judeo-Christian religion has been tempered, in the Catholic tradition, by the cult of *hyperdulia* aimed at Mary, a fact that threw Goethe into rapture (see *Diary of the Italian Journey*), and one could equally say it was countered by the *sophia*-theology of the Eastern Christians, sometimes blamed for going so far that they turned Mary into a fourth hypostasis of the Trinity.

Weber walks on a beaten path, saying that Whitehead, Husserl, Emerson, and Thoreau noticed how mechanical science opened perspectives for technology, but also covered the world of life: the great cosmic organism

was replaced by a clock. This is not much different from the clockmaker and clock that became the rule in dualism. For Whitehead, the development of science would not have been possible without faith, of *both* the blind and reasoned type. Weber does not seem to be aware of how this alliance against nature, predicated on a dualistic and paternalistic Judeo-Christian order, is an oversimplification where he furthers dubious assertions of the Prigogine-inspired Brussels school (see my *La théologie de la nature et la science à l'ère de l'information*). This reminds one of Newton inventing the clockmaker vision of the world and of vitalism, in which there are also unexplained explanatory principles. Again, Weber's analysis seems to be aimed at extreme capitalism (48-49), but it does not seem to weigh as heavily against a consumption society that contains psychic participation and even liturgical common belongingness to important events.

Chapter three reviews Devereux's idea of an inversion of the penis envy of Freud into a desire for a receptacle. Weber suggests that Western ontology, Greek and medieval, could be reread from the viewpoint of this question of the power that lay dormant, but never exhausts itself, in the receptacle. It is interesting to note how the Catholic metaphysician Stanislas Breton thought along the same lines, but expressed it in different terms (see *Matière et dispersion*, Grenoble). When we turn to Laing, Weber recalls how his anti-psychiatry synthesis brought together existentialism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis, with psychosis interpreted as a communicational deficit and an intrapsychic voyage. Anguish also was interpreted as the retreat into a fortress with a definite security that is never possible. Laing sees the psychotic as erecting defenses to cope with the porous character of the psyche. The idea of syntony is finally elaborated upon as a recasting of triggering events that are anguish-producing and that extend from manifestations of limits lived as a threat to the even more destabilizing aspect of the absence of limits. Events will acquire a psychotopic value and a continuity will establish itself from the organic world into the inorganic. Syntony brings back the affect and affectivity, as Minkowski articulated in the light of the philosophy of Bergson. "Schizoidy" thus becomes an incapacity to resonate with the phases of events. This section is perhaps not the clearest to grasp for the reader, who will not always have the capacity to call to mind all that went into Minkowski's synthesis as well as Weber's own (see Herbert Spiegelberg, *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry*). Weber affirms that the ideological key that is common to institutional psychiatry and to the anti-psychiatry movement is that of a humanism which is incompatible with

techno-scientific understanding. Technology creates homogeneity by segregation. The conclusion offers, quite coherently, solutions for a reintegration of the philosophical dimension into psychological consultation, which would be achieved for the most part through rediscovering the meaning of dialogue.

**WILLIAM J. MEYER.** *Darwin in a New Key: Evolution and the Question of Value.* Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016: 123 pages. [Reviewed by ADAM C. SCARFE, Department of Philosophy, University of Winnipeg, Canada. Email: <a.scarfe@uwinnipeg.ca>]

As part of the contemporary effort to move beyond the neo-Darwinist paradigm in biology (of Dawkins and Dennett) which subscribes to a totalizing mechanistic metaphysic that reduces organisms to replication machines for their selfish genes, Meyer proposes to reread Darwin “in a new key” (x). The title of the book is an obvious homage to Suzanne Langer’s 1942 volume *Philosophy in a New Key* that was influenced by Whitehead’s thought. Whereas neo-Darwinists in general articulate a “two-dimensional” view of evolution, concentrating on the struggle for survival and on replication, natural selection being a mindless and valueless algorithm, Meyer suggests a “three-dimensional” orientation which is inclusive of an emphasis on the valuative and creative activities of organisms. Inspired by Whitehead’s organismic process-relational philosophy which provides an “integrated expression [of Darwin’s] biological and evaluative conclusions” (5), instead of interpreting Darwin as a staunch mechanist (as Dawkins and Dennett do), Meyer aims to show that Darwin’s *Origin of Species* and his other works implicitly assume a *teleology of value*. Meyer’s aim to uncover a *teleology of value* in nature also contrasts sharply with the (largely flawed) effort on the part of creationists and intelligent design proponents to combat the neo-Darwinian notion that there is nothing more to evolution than a mindless, mechanistic, and algorithmic process by asserting that a *teleology of design* underpins it. Meyer takes issue with traditional approaches which attempt to uncover teleology in the “long train to nowhere” (2) that is the evolutionary past, namely, in accounting for how life began and of how it emerged. Rather, Meyer expresses that his own focus on the teleology of value is “forward-looking,” in the same way that organisms “seek and actively pursue desired