

**Review of Ian Prattis, *The Essential Spiral: Ecology and Consciousness After 9/11*, Lanham: University Press of America, 2002, 262 pages, ISBN 0-7618-2361-1.**

Reviewed by Helmut Wautischer (Department of Philosophy, Sonoma State University, California) for *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 2003.

In *The Essential Spiral* Ian Prattis achieves a remarkable synthesis of academic integrity while at the same time illustrating the value of spiritual awareness in the pursuit of scientific knowledge. Rather than pointing fingers at others and without blaming anyone, Prattis demonstrates a form of knowledge mediation that only meditative awareness can bring. He has taken on a difficult task by questioning the dominant paradigm in politics and science as he introduces compassionate outcome assessments and conjoins scientific integrity with the integrity of a researcher who recognizes that evolution of consciousness adheres to inherently different principles than that which a Darwinian model suggests for organisms.

The sober and realistic style of this book maintains its credible and convincing conclusion even in the wake of 9/11 and the ongoing wars in the Middle East: once compassionate consciousness surpasses fear, it equips an individual with a sense of peace, understanding, and proactive participation in community. Envisioning a peaceful world and developing the intellectual capacity to assess research objectives are the most effective tools for desirable social change. Prattis draws from a wide spectrum of perspectives ranging from Chief Seattle, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Hildegard of Bingen to Gregory Bateson, Francisco Varela, and Rachel Carson; and in application at UNESCO, deep ecology, and the World Trade Organization.

A gifted storyteller, Prattis opens the reader's mind and heart with touching narratives from his own life experience and from carefully selected literary masterpieces from various traditions. At the end of each chapter he guides the reader into a meditation. Fear transforms to courage, anger to compassion; doubt becomes joyful wisdom as the beauty of imagery guides meditation practice toward a realization of compassionate strength. Such vigor is certainly needed, since the complicity between corporate and political elites disregards the planet and its peoples. Their degradation then becomes the causes and conditions for mass alienation and violent conflict as different populations compete for shrinking resources (p.166).

Against all odds, compassionate mindfulness is a contributing factor in the evolution of consciousness to empower incorruptible leadership that emerges from increasing populations on this planet who practice their wisdom.

*The Essential Spiral* combines facts from the sciences, politics, and spirituality to present a realistic road map for a gradual transformation of community-based capitalism and personal awareness. Prattis has done a commendable job of outlining a sustainable ecosystem and providing meditative exercises that will strengthen the compassionate resolve for the next generation of political leadership: “this is the work of the new revolutionary of the 21st century, transforming terror and violence by nurturing peace, lucidity and compassion” (p. 242).