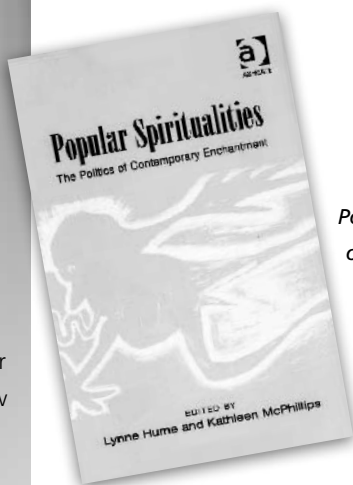


came first and shaped how they perceived the 'ground of being'. If so, then Hamilton has indeed failed to find a basis for morality. The perception of universal sympathy, which he aims for, is only one possible result, and that sympathy, or compassion, may be limited to fellow believers. If this is so, then how do we encourage people to experience and act upon the knowledge that we are all in this together? Indeed, how do we know that this process of perceiving noumenon is both good and useful? How do we know that people won't twist it to serve their selfish or limited ends? How indeed, to ask one traditional question, do we know that God is good?

Answers, I suggest, can only be achieved if we work to discover how unconscious processes (of the psyche, the social and the ecology) structure our lives, and learn not only how to live with these processes, but with the realities and sufferings of life, without allocating blame to others and making them our shadow, and still managing to act in society. This is a political and collective therapy, and should not rush to conclusions before it has begun. Clive Hamilton's book is an important step in that direction and can be thoroughly recommended for all who wish to explore these issues.



*Popular Spiritualities: The Politics of Contemporary Enchantment*

Edited by Lynne Hume and Kathleen McPhillips  
Ashgate Publishing Company,  
Aldershot, UK, 2006.

*Reviewed by Jacinta Frawley*

*Popular Spiritualities* is a collection of essays exploring the re-emergence of enchantment in the contemporary West. The decline in traditional religions is the starting point for a look at wildly divergent forms of spiritual expression, and most interestingly, a look in places that might traditionally be defined as soulless—popular culture, the internet, mind-altering substances, literature, fantasy, and political engagement.

**K**ATHLEEN MCPHILLIPS, Senior Lecturer in the School of Humanities at the University of Western Sydney, was inspired to collect and edit the essays for her students, who were seeking ways to recognise and re-imagine contemporary spiritual and religious expression for their communities and themselves. Those drawn to C.G. Jung's thoughts on the search for meaning will also find much to engage their imaginations in this compilation.

The editors define enchantment as "the sensation when one experiences events or circumstances that produce a sense of the mysterious, the weird and the uncanny... re-enchantment brings back the imagination and the possibility of magic into our everyday lives" (xv). This is what Jung would have referred to as the numinous.

The essays explore very diverse expressions of contemporary spirituality, some bordering on traditional religious expression,

some so far removed as to seem eccentric. The book is predicated on the idea that “people are searching for community, meaning and something sacred or supernatural, and that the new spiritualities are eclectic, imaginative, and experimental” (xvi). The essays present case studies of New Age practices, modern vampirism, goddess worship, and spiritual practices drawing on and expressed in various literary forms such as comic books, horror and fantasy literature, and myths and legends. In tune with current sensibilities, eco-paganism is well described, as groups engage spiritually and politically to protect and re-enchant the environment. Indeed, the importance of place as a container and source of spirituality resonates through many of these essays. Likewise the role of community to define and be defined by spiritual practices is discussed in essays on communities as diverse as goddess worshipers, drummers, and gay communities.

In particular I was drawn to three essays. Bob Hodge, writing

on spiritual tourism, encourages us to think about the meaning of travel. The spiritual impulse behind travel is easily lost as spiritual pilgrims, seduced by cheap airfares and hotel packages, become tourists, and return home vaguely disappointed that their journey became not a holy-day but a vacant vacation.

Closer to traditional religious experience is McPhillips’ essay on modern Marian devotion. McPhillips discusses three recent Australian appearances of the Virgin Mary—in Yankalilla, South Australia, Rockingham, Western Australia, and Coogee, New South Wales—and wonders about the intertwining of visions of saints, and the significance of the particular place of the visions, in forming and de-forming belief.

Death is the universal certainty that we share with every other animate being, yet it is the most individual of experiences. Margaret Gibson’s essay on memory and immortality discusses the role of public grieving as providing meaning and comfort to the individual,

as well as uniting and defining communities.

*Popular Spiritualities* is an academic text, so some adventurousness is required with technical terms. And the adventure is well rewarded. Who of us know, for instance, that sociologists have a word that describes the study “of the means by which one might be saved”? Soteriology, from the Greek for salvation, studies activities such as meditation, guidance practices, spiritual healing, and presumably more traditional means of salvation such as prayer and good works.

The essays in this challenging and engaging book resonate with several recent Jung Society talks discussing the search for meaning in clinical settings—in particular, Peter Dicker’s talk on Dionysus, Robert Bosnak’s work on dreams, and Kath McPhillips’ own recent talk on Marion Woodman. All look at the role of healing, the numinous, self-identity and individuation. The language may differ but the wish to re-enchant the world, and ourselves, is universal.