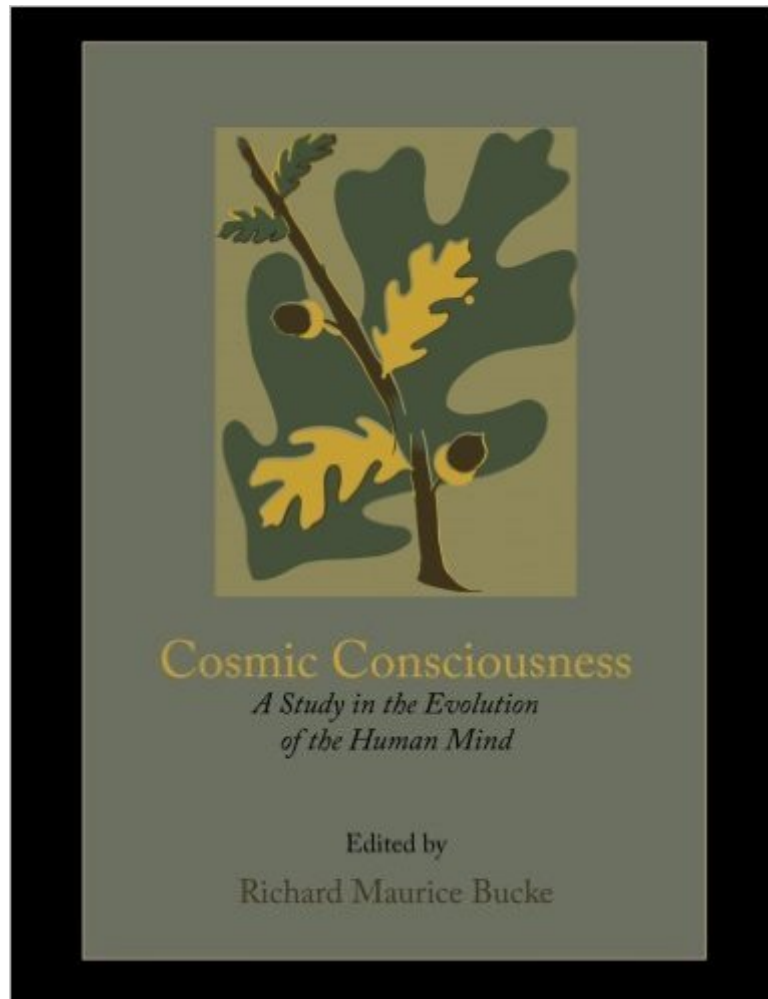


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Cosmic Consciousness: A Study In The Evolution Of The Human Mind



Synopsis

2010 Reprint of 1905 edition. This work is the magnum opus of Bucke's career, a project that he researched and wrote over many years. In it, Bucke described his own experience, that of contemporaries (most notably Whitman, but also unknown figures like "C.P."), and the experiences and outlook of historical figures including Buddha, Jesus, Paul, Plotinus, Muhammad, Dante, Francis Bacon, and William Blake. Bucke developed a theory involving three stages in the development of consciousness: the simple consciousness of animals; the self-consciousness of the mass of humanity (encompassing reason, imagination, etc.); and cosmic consciousness - an emerging faculty and the next stage of human development. Among the effects of this progression, he believed he detected a lengthy historical trend in which religious conceptions and theologies had become less and less fearful. A classic work.

Book Information

Paperback: 338 pages

Publisher: Martino Publishing (August 20, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1578989620

ISBN-13: 978-1578989621

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.8 x 9.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (82 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This book was one of the first to consider religious illumination from a psychological perspective. It differs from William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* in that many of Bucke's opinions (e.g. his views on socialism) have been refuted by history. In order to judge it objectively, one ought thus to always keep in mind the era in which it was written. The basic point is that the human race is slowly and sporadically - albeit with increasing speed - advancing in consciousness to a higher state that will eventually lift the species above the fear, ignorance and brutality that have plagued mankind throughout history. Bucke's argument - which may be strongly disputed today - is based on analogy. He points out the three phases of consciousness found among living creatures: perception

amongst lower animals, receptual consciousness amongst higher animals and the conceptual thinking of human beings which is accompanied by a strong sense of self. In a very interesting chapter he demonstrates the development of consciousness over the last couple of millennia with reference to mankind's improving ability to distinguish colors. Initially only black and red were differentiated, but what was perceived as "red" has been refined into red, orange, yellow and white and even further. Likewise with "black" which split up into black and blue-green, from which the separate colors blue and green were again discerned: "The blazing blue of the oriental sky is not mentioned in Homer or the Bible, nor the Rig Veda or Zend Avesta."

This book remains pioneering and a true one and only. It is as valuable today as it was when it was first published over 100 years ago and will remain valuable for many, many, many years to come, despite the fact that some of the author's views and information is clearly dated. (What sacred work isn't?) The message is timeless and I actually find the dated quality to be part of its charm; bringing us back to inspiring days at the forefront of modern science, technology, and modern thought, and the days when Darwin's works were still seen as quite new. What is most unique about this book is the author's illuminating and still modern approach; psychological, analytical and scientific, -we feel we can understand him in plain English and without blind faith or obedience- yet fused with the most inspiring mysticism the world has ever known or seen. The result is simply, that he gets his magnificent point and theory across with inspiring, vivid clarity and the implications are quite astounding to the reader if not wholly awesome. Indeed, the picture that this book creates is much greater than the sum of its parts. Don't be fooled by the fact that the title "Cosmic Consciousness" (the term the book itself coined) has been swooped up through the years by weirdos, kooks and new age charlatans. This is NOT that. Nor is it some cold, "rational" and "scientific" look at spirituality that will leave you doubting, depressed and without meaning. This book and what it can still teach is truly a work of divinity - or at least inspired truly by it to an educated, esteemed doctor, but altogether ordinary man. (You don't feel you are being talked down to, more like listening to your very smart friend.

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