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Book Reviews | Health By Ethan Gresko

The Whole Elephant Revealed: Insights into the existence and operation of universal laws and the Golden Ratio

By Marja de Vries.

Coming across a good self-help book truly emits a feel-good feeling within the reader. By flipping through the pages, you realize things about yourself and those around you, about environments you find yourself in, and how to approach the self and environment with a new, positive outlook.

There are self-help books, and there is “The Whole Elephant”

be more likely to gain a picture of “the whole elephant.” Through her descriptions of the universal laws, de Vries makes several connections to understanding the workings of the greater picture of life.

For example, when she touches upon masculine and feminine energies and principles, she is explaining the Law of Dynamic Balance, and how both as opposites — with the need for asymmetry between the two as to avoid a static balance — creates a whole. This asymmetry, however, must lean towards the feminine, inwardly directed principle, to maintain “progress of the evolutionary process in the di-

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that focuses on seven universal laws that describe the inner workings of the universe; de Vries uses these laws as points of reference to understanding how we can aim to exist at a greater harmony within ourselves and the universe.

Before diving into these laws and understanding them, she shares a Sufi story about a city whose inhabitants were blind and tried to piece together the parts of a mighty elephant. When the other villagers asked about the form, shape or nature of the elephant, different answers were given based on who touched what part of the animal. De Vries writes, “This is why it is easy for us to understand that if the blind people were to combine their observations, like different parts of a puzzle making up the greater whole, they would

rection of higher quality.” De Vries notes that “we have lost touch with our feelings, our intuition, our creativity... [and] are far less aware of our contact with the world of energy” because the dynamic balance “has been dominated by the outwardly directed masculine aspect.” There’s lots of hyper-masculine identity that would probably shy away from focusing on anything called feminine energy, but de Vries has a point here. Directing attention here connects and integrates both masculine and feminine principles to promote development. In other words, you’d be able to focus largely on growth and inner guidance to better understand what is around us.

The general aim for the book was to create a situation where

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children have the chance to develop their full potential. The premises she writes about, such as focusing on the feminine principle, serve as a foundation for innovations in global public education. Her focus makes total sense; through reading, I came across instances in which I recognized advice I have been given throughout my own life. One of these examples is in chapter six, the Law of Vibration, which “helps us to understand that we unconsciously regularly focus on that which we do not want instead of what we do want.” What de Vries refers to, plainly, is visualizing something in order to achieve it (the advice I mentioned).

Through synthesizing the universal laws with Western science, she cites physicist Robert Jahn and developmental psychologist Brenda Dunne, who wrote that the human consciousness affects the probability of events. Researcher Dean Radin comes to a similar conclusion, that “focused attention strengthens the power of our intention, because focused attention makes the waves we emit more coherent, that is, more unambiguous and therefore more powerful.” This is the sort of thing that would be wise to share with children as they develop; by giving them confidence in what they do, they will not only feel stronger about their choices and actions, but it will reaffirm for them that they can achieve their goals.

If you focus on de Vries’ objective for “The Whole Elephant,” it is easy to praise what she was working towards. While reading the text, it may come across a little

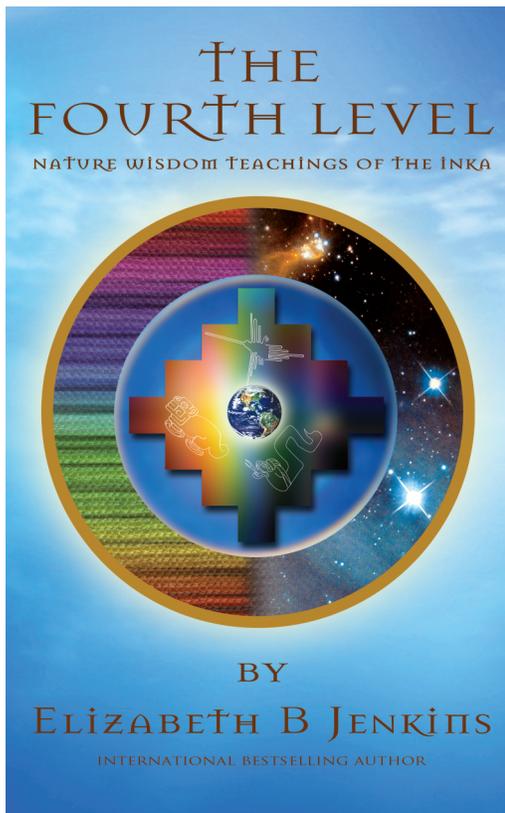
thick— as if it could have helped to have been separated into a few volumes. De Vries shares a vast amount of knowledge and information from cover to cover, and if you're interested in expanding your mind and thinking a bit more openly, dive into understanding the universal laws around you.

The Fourth Level: Nature Wisdom Teachings of the Inka
By Elizabeth B. Jenkins

Imagine you're on a hike, or on a remote beach at sunset, or whatever your nature-fix may be, and you begin to experience that 'wow' moment. It's a moment where you cannot fathom that what you're looking at is actually real, that something so beautiful can be natural and produce such emotion. What you're feeling is something that the Q'ero people of Peru call sami, meaning "nectar," and it's the refined energy that trees, plants and other living things produce. Basically, it's the feel-good feeling that gravitates us to being outside when we're angry or sad.

Sami and other Q'ero wisdoms are passed on in Elizabeth Jenkins's culminating study "The Fourth Level: Nature Wisdom Teachings of the Inka." Since 1988, Jenkins has closely associated herself with the Q'ero, "amazingly resilient, yet compassionate, soft-spoken, humble people" living in a remote area of the Andes. From her time comes a passion to share their teachings to build a connection with "Mother Earth." Jenkins passes on seven "Nature Contemplations," invitations to personal subjective experiences with the capacity to strengthen that connection, as well as seven levels of "psychospiritual development" (one of which being the said "fourth level").

The fourth level is the Inka definition of adulthood and when we're connected with Mother Earth. It is described by Jenkins as "the perspective of astronaut Edgar Mitchell, looking at the Earth from outer space and seeing the whole Earth as one being with all of us aboard— that is truly the point of view of the 4th level." To



LEVEL 5, 6 & 7

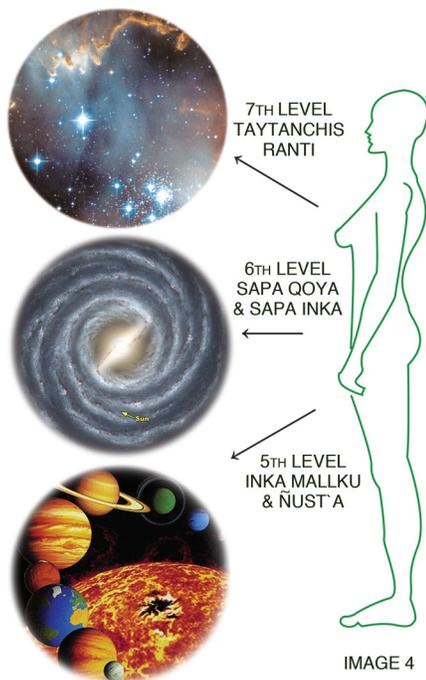


IMAGE 4

the Q'ero, by achieving these levels one truly resonates and can communicate with nature.

The nature contemplations, and the preparatory exercises that preface them, appear to be great meditative practices not only for connecting to nature and Mother Earth but also evolving as a person. Jenkins walks readers through breathing, being conscious of your body and your surroundings, and receiving "fine" ener-

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gies while dealing or digesting "heavy" energy. Fine or heavy energy play a huge role in our daily mindsets and how we perceive moments in our lives, even for people not familiar with Inka practices. Fine energy "needs to be constantly ingested just as we need fresh oxygen, food and water, while heavy energy needs to be released, just as we must exhale... to maintain health."

Think again about being on that hike or being on that beach and experiencing the 'wow' moment. Personally, it is the closest I have come to undergoing a release of heavy energy and intake of fine energy without consciously trying to do so. I find hiking to be the closest spiritual experience I partake in— something to do with how being in that environment makes me feel physically and emotionally. If something like that can come naturally, practicing the nature contemplations seems like a constructive path to experiencing that feeling frequently.

Albert Einstein is quoted in "The Fourth Level" saying "look deep, deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better." If there is something that Jenkins truly passes on to the reader, it is the level of understanding that the Q'ero have for Mother Earth and their environment. There are many different things to take from the book, whether you read it for spiritual, cultural, historical or just-be-cause purposes. You're not only taught Q'ero practices, but are invited to better understand a culture that many will never get a chance to witness.