

## IN HER LATE FIFTIES SHEILA WAS DIAGNOSED WITH A MILD CASE OF ADD.

She was struggling with the most basic tasks at work, so her psychiatrist prescribed Ritalin, which she found gave her some relief. Sheila also began working with a psychologist who suggested she try taking a combination of flower essences—Cosmos, Peppermint, Rabbitbrush, Rosemary, and Shasta Daisy—to address her concentration, focus, and bodily awareness. In time she found she could stop taking the Ritalin and that a longstanding case of eczema disappeared as well. Her psychologist observed that the flower essences had affected the underlying anxiety that is common to ADD and eczema.

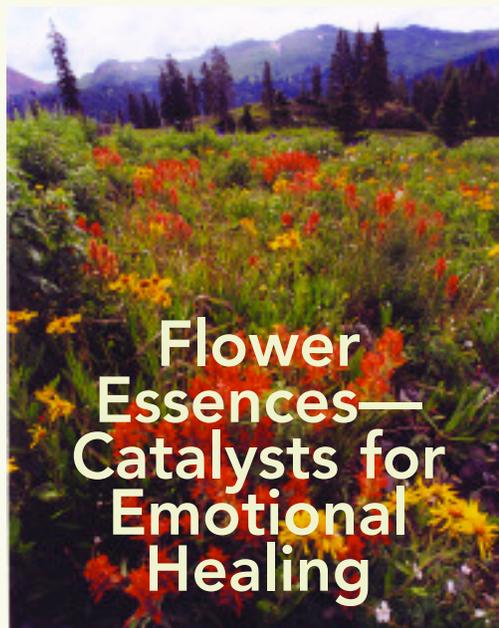
Flower essences were first developed in the 1930s by Edward Bach, whose work in medicine led him from surgery to immunology (where he developed intestinal vaccines) to homeopathy (where he developed his vaccines into homeopathic nosodes) and finally to his discovery of 39 flower remedies. His insight that feelings and thoughts are intimately related to one's health predated the findings of psychoneuro-immunology and holistic health informing health care's transformation today. Bach, however, grew to distrust the reductionist-materialist science of his day, so that his writings about flower essences do not provide a scientific basis. He relied on the experiences of his patients and others to validate the efficacy of his remedies.

Following Bach's death in 1936, flower remedies steadily grew in popularity among health professionals and family caretakers seeking holistic approaches to wellness. In recent decades, numerous reports of clinical success with flower essence therapy have led to increasing interest among innovative researchers to include flower essences as subjects of scientific study. Richard Katz, who founded the Flower Essence Society in 1979 to promote flower essence research and education, observes that "Bach's distrust of science is understandable, if by 'science' we mean a system of thought which insists that only that which can be quantified is real and that human beings are mere products of biochemical and genetic mechanisms. Bach did not anticipate the possibility of a new science, one that is fully compatible with a spiritual understanding of the human being and the world of nature."

Flower essences are liquid, potentized (highly diluted) plant preparations formulated to convey the distinct etheric pattern of a specific flower. They are not a biochemical medicine but a diluted, energetic remedy akin to homeopathy. Unlike homeopathic remedies, however, flower essences are not based on the Law of Similars, and they are made exclusively from the fresh blossoms of plants. The preparation of flower essences requires careful attention to the purity of the flowers' environment, the vibrancy and potency of the blossoms, celestial and meteorological conditions, and the physical and energetic properties of the plant's growth cycle. Once the plant's vibrational pattern is infused into water and potentized to a dosage level, drops of the infusion can be used topically in a cream, spray bottle, or bath, but are

more commonly ingested under the tongue. Although highly diluted from a physical point of view, the essences are believed to work vibrationally as catalysts for emotional awareness and change that in turn affect the physical body.

To date, a scientific understanding of the essences has been approached through clinical outcome studies, double-blind placebo studies (see both [www.flowersociety.org](http://www.flowersociety.org) and [www.edwardbach.org](http://www.edwardbach.org)), and clinical reports from flower essence practitioners in many countries. (In 1999 Cuba's Ministry of Public Health officially recognized flower essence therapy as a valid medical



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modality to be integrated into its national health-care system.) Evidence that water can be a carrier of information—the subject of Jacques Benveniste's controversial studies in homeopathy and Masuro Emoto's investigations with water—might offer a partial explanation for the effects of flower essences, indicating another avenue for research. "If we consider the development of physics, from relativity to quantum mechanics and chaos theory, it is clear that science has already broken through the boundaries of Newtonianism, even if mechanistic thinking still dominates medical science," says Katz. "So it isn't unreasonable to suggest that scientific inquiry can be applied to the life forces of plants and their interaction with human energy systems."

—Vesela Simic  
Associate Editor

conflicts with the worlds external to their belief system.

In his final chapter Bowker ponders the “new crisis” of religion. He asserts that historically, the primary role of religion was to preserve the social order that ensured the perpetuation of the species. This was accomplished through systems that governed food and fertility, hence religion’s long preoccupation with defining and enforcing sexual laws, especially as they related to women. Religions have persisted because they transmit information crucial to human survival, at least until the current era. Bowker suggests that a continued focus on reproductive and sexual issues puts religions at risk of becoming irrelevant. Religions would better secure their value to human society by assisting us to realize our spiritual potential and by transmitting wisdom about existence.

*The Sacred Neuron* is an impressive scholarly work. Bowker brings great care to developing his ideas and provides ample references to the foundations of his thought. His style is decidedly academic; readers who prefer ideas served up plainly may find themselves working to locate Bowker’s central concepts. For patient readers, however, *The Sacred Neuron* offers rewards, not only in the conclusions that may be drawn from Bowker’s thoughts but also from following an intellectual journey that promises to educate readers.

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### **The Diamond in Your Pocket**

by Gangaji

(Sounds True, 2005)

Reviewed by Vesela Simic

*Shift*’s recent inquiry into the mysteries of consciousness led our editor-in-chief to wonder, “If matter follows mind, what does mind follow?” In Gangaji’s recent book, she directs us to experience what happens when mind, any mind, follows a trail back to its beginning. The process of faithful, at turns unrelenting, and ultimately liberating self-inquiry that Gangaji supports throughout *The Diamond in Your Pocket* can lead to mind’s source—the source that is also the ground of all being and the truth of who we really are. “The truth of who you are as pure

consciousness, the totality of being, is infinitely deeper and vaster than any mental understanding of it,” she writes. “The mind is an exquisite learning tool. But self-realization, as well as the deepest inspiration and creativity, come directly from the source of the mind.”

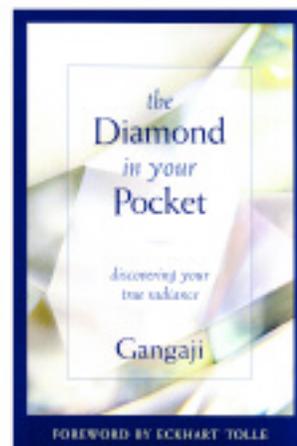
Gangaji was so named by her teacher, Sri H. W. L. Poonjaji, a family man from Punjab whose own desire to “see God” was fulfilled in the silent gaze of Sri Ramana Maharshi, one of India’s most revered sages. By the time Gangaji met Poonjaji in India in 1990,

she was ready for his instruction to “stop” all the doing—all the beliefs, the searching, the excuses, all the mental activity—and in stopping, the fulfillment and peace she had sought revealed themselves to be present all along.

“I saw that the truth of who I am is this beingness. This same beingness is present everywhere, in everything, visible and invisible. In this realization, there occurred a remarkable shift of attention from my *story* of being to the endless depth of being that had always existed underneath the story.” She was free, no longer bound “by the story of ‘me’!”

“I had thought that it couldn’t be so simple . . . Finally, I realized that *whatever* I thought was always only a thought, impossible to rely on because it was subject to conditioning and disappearance. In the discovery of truth, thought could no longer be trusted. Thought could no longer be master. The previous fear of not knowing was transformed into the joy of not knowing. To *not know* was the opening of my mind to what could not be perceived by thought . . . What profound release!”

Upon her return to the States, Gangaji was instructed by Poonjaji to speak with others about her experience. These gatherings have grown into worldwide public meetings and retreats, from which excerpts have been edited and compiled into this book of skillfully guided



self-inquiry. Each of the short, self-contained chapters serves to unravel our thinking so that we might also experience what lies beneath the surrender of our thoughts: “The only obstacle to realizing the truth of who you are is *thinking* who you are.” Each chapter is an opportunity to see from yet another perspective how we overlook, misidentify, fear, in some way prevent ourselves from discovering directly that “we are all aspects of, points of reference for, the one essential consciousness.”

Eckhart Tolle’s foreword sets Gangaji’s work in the context of today’s collective awakening, “It is part of an evolutionary transformation of cosmic magnitude.” A participant in IONS Research Department’s Transformation Project (an investigation of the science of transformation in everyday life), Gangaji reminds us that the global crises challenging our planet make individual awakening “increasingly urgent. It is not just a good thing to do or an addition to our knapsack of experience trinkets. It is not even about some kind of personal pleasure or achievement. Awakening is essential if we are to recognize the patterns of hatred and blame that go on within our own minds and which in turn are reflected into the world . . . In your willingness to see the truth of that, to experience the horror of that, and finally to see what is forever untouched by that, you are at least one aspect of consciousness that knows itself to be free. In that *living knowledge*, which ignores nothing, it is possible to make yourself useful to all of life.”

**VESELA SIMIC** is Shift’s associate editor.

***Monkeyluv  
and Other Essays on  
Our Lives as Animals***

by Robert Sapolsky  
(Scribner, 2005)

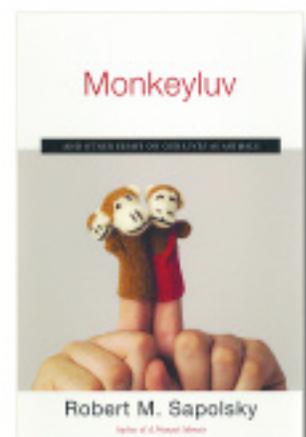
Reviewed by Peggy Short

Anyone unfamiliar with Robert Sapolsky’s writings might assume his latest work, *Monkeyluv*, is an entertaining book on primate sexual behavior, but the title is misleading. Sapolsky, a professor of biology and neurology at Stanford University and the recipient of a MacArthur Foundation genius grant, has assembled a quirky and insightful essay

collection that progressively illustrates the elegant complexity and unpredictability of behavior. The clever writing style may put off some readers, but the content in every essay is compelling.

*Monkeyluv* is divided into three sections, each examining “who we are” in light of our genes, our bodies, and society. Concerned by the recent scientific, and popular, trend of worshipping “at the altar of the gene,” Sapolsky uses the first section to revisit nature–nurture questions about behavior as he reveals the sophisticated interactions between both environmental and genetic influences. Several essays recount attempts by behavioral scientists to obsessively control the genetic strains of their fruit flies, mice, or human subjects, only to be faced with inexplicable and unpredictable study results despite their efforts. For example, Sapolsky describes a study in which identical strains of mice are placed in standardized, controlled environments, “a world,” he writes, “of genetically indistinguishable mice raised in virtually identical environments.” Yet the results of behavioral testing on these mice reflect “sheer chaos—the same strain differed radically from lab to lab.” In this instance, and others throughout the book, Sapolsky deftly, and often humorously, cites examples of the plastic and unpredictable interactions occurring between genes and the environment that together affect behavior.

Consistently interpreting scientific findings in clear and accessible language, Sapolsky proceeds to explore the elegant interplay among our bodies, brains, and thoughts in the second section of the book. All essays conclude with fascinating annotated resources and observations for the enterprising reader who wants to explore more fully a specific field. Sapolsky explains that many of his essays are the result of “hit-and-run obsessions,” where he gets crazed about a topic, reads endlessly about it, drives his wife to distraction with monologues, and then writes to get it out of his system. Ultimately, his obsessions lead him



to see the broader social and cultural contexts of how behavior works, which is most evident in the third section of the book where he considers links among ecology, culture, and behavior.

For example, in an essay entitled “The Cultural Desert,” Sapolsky describes anthropological findings that show how cultures from savannahs and deserts tend to be monotheistic, while inhabitants of the diverse rain forests tend to be polytheistic. That makes sense, he explains, because “deserts teach big, singular things,” whereas people in a rain forest live in a world with thousands of different kinds of plants and herbs. “Letting a thousand deities bloom in the same sort of equilibrium must seem the most natural thing in the world.” Desert societies also tend to be more warlike and territorial, are more likely to purchase or keep women as slaves, more modest about nudity, and have more laws about premarital sex than rain forest cultures. Sapolsky explains that to truly understand ourselves, we not only have to look at biology and genetics but also at the ecological history of our forebears. Readers can easily draw inferences from these findings, as the desert dwellers comprise the world’s three largest religions (Christianity, Islam, and Judaism), perpetuating territorial wars and cultural attitudes reflected in our news reports. We are also progressively eliminating not only the rain forests but also the rich cultures and diversity within them, including alternative theologies and cosmologies.

Sapolsky joins a legacy of erudite scientists who are able to distill, analyze, and place in broad perspective the results of varied scientific studies that, in some cases, might have been misinterpreted or misunderstood. This is particularly important in a sociopolitical climate where the Union of Concerned Scientists feel they must fight the political establishment to disseminate clear and relevant scientific research. We need cogent, accessible information about the latest scientific findings, and Sapolsky does his part in *Monkeyluv*, elucidating recent studies in cell biology and the intrigues of natural selection, as well as genetic research and human—and sometimes other animals’—neural and behavioral reactions.

**PEGGY SHORT, PHD**, is a research consultant, editor, and former professor. She has published research on the neurosciences, bereavement, spirituality, and health.

## NOTEWORTHY

### *Aquarius Now: Radical Common Sense and Reclaiming Our Personal Sovereignty*

by Marilyn Ferguson

(Red Wheel/Weiser, 2005)

Reviewed by AnaLouise Keating

Twenty-five years after her bestseller *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Marilyn Ferguson again challenges readers to revolutionize human consciousness by accessing our unused potential. Although the “new age” she called for and predicted in her earlier book has not fully appeared, she confidently maintains her belief that personal transformation and social revolution are possible, and indeed inevitable. Ferguson balances her optimistic view of human potential by acknowledging that the majority of people live timidly, consumed by an over-reliance on materialism and rational thought, trapped in what she calls “a paradigm of measurement and limits.” As in her earlier book, Ferguson maintains that social change begins with the individual. Thus she enjoins readers to trust our tremendous inner power and regain what she describes in the subtitle as “personal sovereignty.” According to Ferguson, we are all visionaries-in-the-making with vast untapped potential.

The first four chapters lay the groundwork for Ferguson’s visionary call, touching on some of her key premises concerning human consciousness, society’s restrictive beliefs, and the intimate connections between individual change and social transformation. In the following ten chapters, she offers a variety of internal strategies, or what she describes as “the visionaries’ secret technologies,” designed to draw on and enhance our intuitive powers. These strategies focus especially on what Ferguson calls “radical common sense”—an embodied, intuitive epistemology she defines as “the sudden insights and unexpected answers that emerge from a state of

