

BOOK REVIEWS

Matrix Energetics: The Science and Art of Transformation by Richard Bartlett. Atria Books, 2007. 208 pp. \$22.95 (hardcover). ISBN 9781582701639.

The Physics of Miracles: Tapping into the Field of Consciousness Potential by Richard Bartlett. Atria Books, 2009. 287 pp. \$24.99 (hardcover). ISBN 9781582702476.

I have read the first book, *Matrix Energetics*, four times and the second book, *The Physics of Miracles*, twice. Just after reading the first book for the first time, one of my students emailed me to say that she had been diagnosed with cancer. I offered to do remote healing for her using the techniques described in the book, to which she agreed. The apparent results were sufficiently promising that I decided to attend an instructional seminar taught by Richard Bartlett in Miami. Since becoming involved with this healing modality, I have attended the Level 1 seminar three times, Level 2 twice, and Levels 3 and 4 once each. Completely independently of Richard Bartlett, I completed a formal experiment in remote healing using techniques derived from Matrix Energetics (ME) and am currently on a second experiment in which there are statistically significantly greater changes in self-reported energy levels at the time that I am actually doing remote healing compared to when I am not. So, based on my experience with ME, I think that the subject matter of these books should be taken seriously and I recommend both of them.

The substance of ME is trivially simple. It boils down to the idea that reality, including physical manifestation, is more plastic than we usually think and can be changed by intending it to be different. Well, there are lots of books that say the same sort of thing, none of which make that sound particularly likely to happen. What kept me reading the first of these two books was the significance that Bartlett attaches to Rupert Sheldrake's notion of morphic fields. A morphic field is a template that physical structures or events can follow (Sheldrake 1988), and it has increasingly seemed to me that something like the presence of morphic fields is needed to explain why physical manifestation takes the shape that it does (Barušs 2010). Bartlett contends that the problem with approaching illnesses, such as cancer, as *problems*, is that that puts one into the morphic field of the illness with the attendant limitations on the possible outcomes that go along with that illness. For beginners, the advice is simply to get out from

underneath the morphic field of whatever problem presents itself. Those who are more advanced can acknowledge a particular problem and stay open outside of its morphic field at the same time. “It is kind of like a split or dual mind” (Bartlett 2009:81).

By itself, the acknowledgment of the presence of morphic fields might not seem to have got us very far. But Bartlett combines that with the notion of superposition in quantum theory. For him, reality remains in an indeterminate state until an observation is made at which time the observer can influence the outcome. Bartlett does not consider the nuances of that contention, for example, of whether it is the selection of what to measure (Kochen & Specker 1967) or the collapse that one affects (Barušs 1986, 2008a, 2008c), or the dismissal of the need for collapse altogether due to decoherence (Polkinghorne 2002). For Bartlett, the contention is simply that there are multiple scripts of what can happen and we can select from among those possibilities. Or, better yet, according to Bartlett, we can allow some deeper wisdom within or outside of ourselves to select for us, since we might not be the best judge of what is optimal for ourselves or someone else.

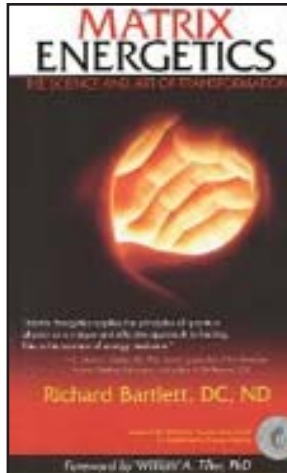
There are also techniques that one uses in the course of doing ME, such as “two-point,” “timetravel,” “archetypes,” and so on. These are described in the first book *Matrix Energetics*. When doing “two-point” for example, I would find a point on a person’s body or somewhere else by noticing what I notice; place one hand on that point; find a second point that seems to me to be related in some way to the first, again by noticing what I notice; imagining that the two points are connected; and then “doing nothing” (Bartlett 2009:80). All of the techniques are essentially variations on playing with one’s imagination in whatever way seems appropriate for oneself. And indeed, as pointed out in the Level 4 training seminar in San Diego on February 26–28, 2011, being creative with these techniques is thought to enhance their effectiveness.

We still do not seem to have gotten anywhere. Someone shows up with cancer. I deliberately forget about the fact that she has cancer, I open up to the possibility that things could be different in her life, I do any of a number of techniques that involve imagining things in my mind, and I make sure I do not intend that any specific outcome occur. *How could that possibly work?* Well, let us return to that question in a moment. Let us consider a more practical question first, *Does that work?* The first answer to the second question is that we do not know. There have been no outcome studies. In fact, Bartlett disparages the use of “innumerable double-blind studies”—the point being rather to seek “new ways to see and to be” (Bartlett 2009:28). The second answer is that there are lots of examples of apparently miraculous healing given in the books, and Bartlett says: “I myself have witnessed the disappearance or dissolving of tumors and other ‘medical miracles’” (Bartlett 2009:29). But he follows

that up with “Does this *always* happen? I wish it were so. If I could heal cancer or anything else with a reasonably reliable certainty, I would do it full-time . . .” (p. 29). But this is precisely where science could be of assistance. If there are cases in which broken bones reset, tumors disappear, scoliosis straightens out, and so on, then those can be compared to cases in which such dramatic healing does not take place and an effort can be made to determine the relevant parameters.

If we assume for a moment that radical transformation actually occurs at least in some cases, then let us return to the first question: *How could that possibly work?* I think that there are several logical possibilities. The first is that ME has its own morphic field; one that continues to grow with each book that Bartlett writes and every seminar that he teaches. “With enough individuals sustaining the consciousness of our special case reality, such as Matrix Energetics, it functions consistently and reliably” (Bartlett 2009:48). So, if I am doing ME, I am drawing on the resources that are delimited by ME, and the idea is that those surpass anything that I could access on my own. And the expectation of the occurrence of radical transformation is embedded within the ME morphic field, increasing the likelihood of anomalous healing.

The second reason that ME could possibly work, I think, has to do with the degree of commitment with which one makes imaginary changes. Bartlett emphasizes the significance of this in a case in which he “became” the Brazilian healer John of God. Bartlett says that he looked at a picture of John of God and



Assuming resonance with his morphic field, I reached up to [the patient]'s nose and “saw” and felt myself as John of God. Without hesitation, in my mind’s eye I inserted John’s surgical clamp right up the man’s nose and into his brain, just as I had seen in the video [of John of God]. Note, I didn’t say that I imagined it; that would not be enough. Instantly [the patient] slumped into unconsciousness. (Bartlett 2007:79)

Of course, for this to work, what goes on in our minds must necessarily have such intimate connections with physical manifestation as to allow for such mental events to have concurrent physical consequences. Which brings us full circle to the initial contention that intention can affect physical manifestation. And I actually think that that is likely on both theoretical and empirical grounds (Barušs 2009). So the third reason that ME could possibly work is because reality is structured in such a way as to allow it to work.

The first book is more practical in that it provides detailed instructions for

doing the ME techniques, whereas the second book spends more time providing a theoretical rationale for why such techniques might work, as well as taking on other subject matter such as invisibility and levitation.

The first book sits well with Bartlett's training as a chiropractor and naturopath and his experience with healing. I feel that Bartlett is on fairly firm ground here and that the first is the stronger of the two books. In venturing a bit deeper into physics in the second book, Bartlett's footing is less secure, and greater care could have been taken with fact-checking. For example, Bartlett gives an example of a complex conjugate number that is obviously not a complex conjugate number (Bartlett 2009:62). This is not surprising, perhaps, because he tells us "I am neither a mathematician nor a physicist" (Bartlett 2007:xix) and "I flunked algebra" (Bartlett 2009:52), but then why not have a mathematician or a physicist proofread the manuscript before it goes to print?

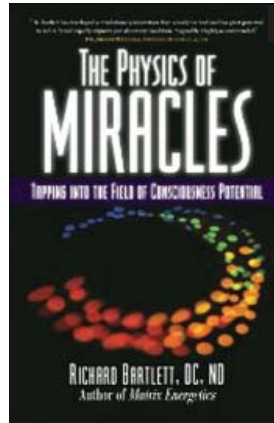
There are similar sorts of factual errors in both books. For instance, Bartlett keeps saying that everything is made of photons (Bartlett 2007:xix,46, Bartlett 2009:111). There are, of course, lots of other elementary particles, such as electrons, quarks, gluons, and so on, which do not reduce to photons (Sudbery 1986). And there are errors not just with mathematics and physics but also with neuroscience. For instance, Bartlett keeps referring to the "left brain" and the "right brain" with the implication that the "left brain" has a more rational processing style and typically dominates the "right brain" which has a more imaginative manner of processing. For instance,

By cultivating the habit of asking powerful, mind-altering questions, you are training your right brain to respond to the signals from your subconscious. (Bartlett 2009:13)

The idea that the left and right cerebral hemispheres have their own distinctive streams of consciousness arose from Roger Sperry's studies of a small number of patients with epilepsy who had had some of their brain commissures severed to varying degrees, thus somewhat isolating the cerebral hemispheres from one another (e.g., Teng & Sperry 1973). By 1980 it had become clear that, in the intact brain, the cerebral hemispheres do not act as units and that there are no differences in processing style between the two hemispheres (Yates 1980, Barušs 1990). In other words, there are no differences between the "left brain" and the "right brain" aside from some small functional asymmetries, so that the expressions "left brain" and "right brain" only have metaphorical value, if any at all.

In *The Physics of Miracles* Bartlett introduces the notion of a *torsion field*, which he then uses as another way of explaining apparently miraculous physical occurrences. As I understand what he is trying to say, the idea is that James Maxwell's original quaternion formulation of electromagnetism accounted for

gravity as well as electromagnetic phenomena and that Oliver Heaviside's subsequent reformulation of Maxwell's work using vector algebra pared away a lot of the content of the original formulation, including the explanation of gravity. Apparently in the original work, physical reality is conceptualized as being four-dimensional by the addition of a scalar potential to the three spatial dimensions. According to Bartlett, this potential "can be projected into the vacuum" causing stress that is "linked" to torsion fields (Bartlett 2009:120, cf. Hoagland & Bara 2009) which "interact with the spins of particles" such as protons and neutrons (Bartlett 2009:144). Bartlett defines a "torsion field" as "The quantum spin of empty space, the large-scale coherent effects of the spin of the particles in the virtual sea" (Bartlett 2009:246, cf. Swanson 2010) and ends up saying things like: "You can imprint your thought forms onto a scalar wave and deliver the product at a distance" (Bartlett 2009:123). And "*This technology of consciousness resides right within the torsion field of our heart linked to our bioplasmic energy fields*" (Bartlett 2009:151). What are we to make of this?



To make sense of this torsion field stuff, let me just make a few preliminary comments. Maxwell said in fact: ". . . I cannot go any further . . . in searching for the cause of gravitation" (Maxwell 1865:493), so that, whatever other valuable insights might have been lost from his original work, it does not appear as though a unified field theory was one of them. These "torsion fields" appear unrelated to the usual definitions of "torsion" in differential geometry (e.g., Millman & Parker 1977) or to Albert Einstein's one-time notion that electromagnetic phenomena could be modelled by such torsion in a general theory of relativity (Sauer 2004). And what any of this might have to do with consciousness is highly speculative, given that there is no scientific agreement on what consciousness even is (Barušs 2008b).

Nonetheless, quaternions, invented by William Hamilton (1843/1944/1945), can be conceptualized as numbers in four-dimensional space (Hathaway 1897), and it is always fun to think of ways in which phenomena could be explained by the introduction of additional spatial dimensions. What and how anything actually gets explained is in the details, and before long one can become mired in minutiae that no longer have anything to do with the phenomena one sought to explain in the first place, as evidenced by string theory (Smolin 2006). In this case we have the additional notion of torsion, but at that point things already start to get confusing. Bartlett wants torsion to arise from spinning macroscopic objects as well as the quantum spin of virtual particles. But it is not at all clear

how those could have anything to do with one another. I mean, in what sense do virtual particles rotate? And to the extent that elementary particles of any sort would be involved, they cannot be bodies actually rotating about axes given that they have no substructures that would allow for such rotation. In fact, elementary particles do not have any continuous temporal existence, nor, by some accounts, any spatial extension. And even if we can resolve those sorts of problems, there are plenty more before we can get to the contentions made by Bartlett, such as,

Torsion fields create a hyperdimensional geometry, which has access to extradimensional realities. When you master the unified field of the heart, you can actually fold space-time locally. (Bartlett 2009:144)

Bartlett's discussion of these matters comes across as muddled. And once quaternions, scalar waves, torsion, bioplasmic fields, the vacuum, and so on get shuffled around sufficiently, then it seems to me that we can "explain" pretty much anything. Having said that, I feel that Bartlett moves through this material intuitively, creating stepping stones for himself that allow him to rationalize what it is that he sees happening even if these stepping stones have only a tenuous relationship to notions in conventional science.

If it is more useful to you [to recreate your reality with your imagination and insight], then it doesn't matter what science says, since the scientists seem to be making it up anyway. (Bartlett 2007:62)

Bartlett realizes that all explanations are ultimately fictional. And he explicitly gives himself the freedom to entertain his own fictions, as in the following example: "In Matrix Energetics, we teach a mythology that states that we are made up of photons" (Bartlett 2009:77). However, and this is my point, further down the same page he intimates that the consensus view is that all elementary particles are made up of photons, which is certainly not the case. Similarly, I think he wants at least some of the hyperdimensional torsion field stuff to refer to actual events within physical manifestation. And it is clear that Bartlett wants scientists to take his work seriously:

From a purely scientific perspective, if you are a physicist, you will see this material quite differently. Please don't let that stop you from considering some of these concepts. (Bartlett 2009:11)

But then it would be helpful, for the sake of those with a background in science, to represent the scientific fictions accurately and to be sensitive to what does and what does not have empirical support.

Thus far in this review, I have emphasized the substance of the subject

matter of these books and deemphasized Bartlett's various experiences. But we can flip that over so that prominence is given to the experiences and read these books as "The Magical Adventures of Richard the Weird Healer" in the course of which he has developed techniques for radical transformation along with a rationale for understanding them. My favorite feats are the "Superman Event" (Bartlett 2009:3) whereby a hallucination of George Reeves dressed up as Superman showed up and helped Bartlett to successfully treat a girl with lazy eye; the near-death experience in which Bartlett crashed his car after hitting black ice near Butte, Montana; and the use of "Rees's Harmonic crystal technology 'thingies'" (Bartlett 2009:195) for healing his patients. Bartlett writes the way he talks, with much punning and humor. He is aware of the fact that laughter is disarming and helps to create a space within which radical transformation can occur, so that he "learned how to make instant changes in both physical and emotional conditions in a fun and playful way" (Bartlett 2007:156). Bartlett reminds me of a Sufi *rind*, whose knowledge of deep aspects of reality is concealed by buffoonery that protects what he has to teach from those who are preoccupied with the surface of life. Indeed, Bartlett appears to delight in playing up the outrageous nature of some of his exploits. For example: "Resolved to wing it, I reached into Dr. Rees's bag of tricks and settled upon a brightly colored plastic doodad" (Bartlett 2009:196–197). So, these books are fun to read. But beyond the beguiling narrative with its smattering of scientific lacunae, they offer promising insights into the nature of reality that I think it would benefit all of us to consider carefully.

IMANTS BARUŠS

Department of Psychology

King's University College at The University of Western Ontario

baruss@uwo.ca

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