

The Science Delusion: Freeing the Spirit of Enquiry by Rupert Shel-drake. Coronet, 2012. 400 pp. €19.99 (paperback). ISBN 9781444727937.

Dr. Sheldrake, an eminent biologist and creative thinker, astounded the scientific world in 1981 with his first book, *A New Science of Life*. Sheldrake posited the view that nature contains within her breast, fields that guide and change life forms. He called them *morphogenetic fields*, which I will label simply as MG-fields. In September, 1981, John Maddox, a senior editor of *Nature*, published an Editorial concerning Sheldrake's opening opus entitled "A Book for Burning?" In it, Maddox said:

Sheldrake's argument is an exercise in pseudo-science. Many readers will be left with the impression that Sheldrake has succeeded in finding a place for magic within scientific discussion—and this, indeed, may have been a part of the objective of writing such a book.

Maddox did not act concerned by the criticism his "burning" comments received, and elaborated on his views: "Sheldrake's [view] can be condemned in exactly the language that the Pope used to condemn Galileo, and for the same reasons: It is heresy."

Therein lays the crux, as they say. Scientists, perhaps exhibiting the very same heretical morphogenetic field of the past clerics surrounding Galileo's time—who abhorred any publishing of anti-clerical views—have seemingly adopted a similar abhorrence in their reluctance to accept within scientific legitimacy anything to do with what cannot be demonstrated by means brought forward via materialistic demand. Or perhaps scientists are in morphogenetic resonance with the field of Bruno at the burning stake; they have adopted a closed and fearful mindset when it comes to going beyond the bounds of materiality. No one will strike the match of illumination to examine the boundary between materialistic and non-materialistic causation, and thus all enquiries in this matter are to be left unstated; "Don't ask, don't tell" is alive and well within the "sacred" halls of science.

Again Sheldrake fearlessly rises to face the burning stake and take materialists to the Inquisition, this time asking them to prove their own claims of materialistic domination. At the end of each chapter he posits questions that need to be answered by materialists as scrupulously as they appear to be asking non-materialists for answers.

I loved this book. Not only is it a delight to read, it makes very logical and clear points that any scientist should be considering in their assumptions concerning the universe, in particular non-materialistic causation.

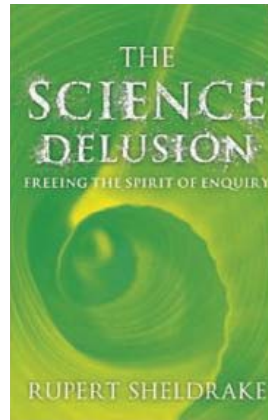
What remains astonishing to me in this 21st century quantum age of

reason is how any serious scientific investigator can take 19th century materialism and all that it professes to include seriously. With the discoveries of quantum physics, materialism was well buried in the past more than one hundred years ago with the discoveries of the *standard model* of quantum field theory (circa 1930–1980) and the special theory of relativity (circa 1905–1910). The most fundamental elements of material are now known to be nonmaterial yet energetic excitations of fermion quantum fields. As such, these excitations making up the families of fermions—quarks, electrons, neutrinos, muons, and taus—can be viewed as moving at lightspeed until they encounter interaction with another field; i.e. the sacrosanct masses of all the particles and the sub-particles that make them up are known to be excitations of these fermion quantum fields in interaction with an apparently invisible Higgs field (the Higgs particle is still being sought for with greater confidence).

So it is that Sheldrake asks us again to consider his MG-field. It is perhaps no more surprising to think that an MG-field gives form and character to living matter than that the Higgs field does so to “dead?” matter. What’s new and heretical about that?

This leads to many consequent boundary illuminations involving how such fields can be detected as causative actors in biological matter including humans and animals. Sheldrake goes on to posit that perhaps we search in the wrong places to expect to find memory within brain and nervous matter when we already know that the memory of matter itself lies within the quantum fields that produce it. Once a material particle comes into existence, the field that produced it and the particle that materialized out of it continue to interact. Without this continual interaction, our universe could not and would not ever come into existence. You can think of this as a resonance that, for example, keeps fermions minding their own business and excluding each other from entering into the same state (known as the Pauli Exclusion Principle). Good thing that, for without this “resonance” atoms could not and would not exist. Nor would you or I.

Taking Sheldrake’s views seriously then leads to new explorations of the material/nonmaterial boundary. For example, take the age-old battle between mind and brain theorists. Does the mind arise as an epiphenomenon from electrical hydrogenated matter? Or is it merely the MG-field acting in resonance with the brain tissue that came from it that produces mind? Examining many cases both anecdotal and experimental, the author



concludes that mind is indeed extended beyond any spatial or temporal boundaries—a conclusion I came to as well in my studies of the dreaming brain and the timing of conscious experiences.

Just how this field works is still a bit mysterious, and I can only add my own speculative thoughts. Previously it seems to me that Sheldrake took it that only the past acts causatively in affecting living matter through the MG-field. In this sense perhaps Sheldrake was still himself caught up in the old mechanistic views of Newton and today's modern materialists (cause before effect). The MG-field involves a kind of tuning of brains with past experiences beyond the brains that seemingly encompass them.

In *Delusion* he does consider telepathic communication as being part of the effects of the MG-field including

future emotional events [that] seem able to work 'backwards in time' to produce detectable physiological effects.

So it may seem that quantum physics which posits such actions plays a greater role in the production of the MG-field than Sheldrake's earlier MG-field theory considers. If we take quantum field theory seriously enough, then it appears that both future and past spacetime boundaries play roles in the arising of mind within matter—something I discussed in greater detail in my own books and papers.

Sheldrake considers many other areas of scientific enquiry normally contained within the purview of objective science and finds them lacking as well. Discussions of how the viewpoints of scientists altered and skewed their findings according to expectations are well-covered here. Even the role played by our educational institutions is taken to the stake. When a "scientific fact" is well-established, there is greater reluctance to publish results that disagree with the "facts." Science students are encouraged to get the "right" answer in experimental class studies rather than the answer they get, and so tend to "fudge" their own work. He questions whether we should take it on face value that the so-called "constants" of nature are really so or perhaps are merely constructs of our own thinking.

Delusions is very well written and enjoyable to read and ponder. *JSE* readers will find it of great interest I am sure. Unfortunately, the book would be better suited for the audience who would still consider it a book for burning and would remain closed to its contents as surely as they would fail to open the book to examine them.

FRED ALAN WOLF

Author of The Dreaming Universe, The Spiritual Universe, Mind into Matter, and Time-Loops and Space-Twists: How God Created the Universe